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A N
E N Q U I R Y
I N T O

The USE and OFFICE
OF
The MORAL LAW,

As in the Hand of the DIVINE SPIRIT:

TOGETHER WITH

The Nature, Publication, and Instrumentality

OF

The G O S P E L C A L L,

Through the same DIVINE AGENT, in the effectual
Calling of SINNERS.

2 COR. iii. 9.

*For if the Ministration of Condemnation be Glory, much more
doth the Ministration of Righteousness exceed in Glory.*

B R I S T O L:

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MDCCLXXXV.



91.13. This treatise was bought
bound up with "Gloria 1706"
Edited by R. Gibbs - and supported
by me & the work of the same
anonymous author - see
my note in that work — *TK*

P R E F A C E.

THROUGH the dealings of Providence being intrusted with more time from secular affairs than some years past, I pondered with myself (after earnest prayer to God) how I should best employ it to his glory; after waiting several months for divine direction, the subject of the following pages occurred to my mind with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction; whence I was prompted to take my pen in hand in search of its importance and sweetness: no subject (all will allow) can be more interesting than the glorious means of everlasting salvation, neither should any be treated with more caution, and under a deeper sense of all human insufficiency unassisted from above. Whoever shall peruse the ensuing inquiry is requested first to consider the eternity and immutability of Jehovah, and to see to it he be well assured, that his thoughts of God correspond with what he hath revealed, touching his own nature and existence, ere he condemn what is therein contained. The candid reader is hereby desired not to censure too hastily, if the manner thereof appear novel; neither to conclude, that what is therein advanced is set forth without human precedent. The entire insufficiency of the law to sanctify the heart of fallen man in the least degree, hath been maintained by

many both eminently great and good, as Martin Luther, that great reformer of Europe from Popery : the great Cameron, who was at the head of the Reformation in France, whose assertions on this matter are quoted in the ensuing work ; as also by H. Zanchy, vol. 4, cap. 5. Dr. Owen in his *Treatise of Justification*, chap. 18, and many others. This being premised and acknowledged, the candid must allow the call of the gospel to be universal and indefinite (a point not rashly to be condemned, and which is principally regarded in the following attempt) consequently to be free from all conditions and pre-requisites : that many divines of unblemished character have asserted as much, need not be proved ; who have also declared that even repentance is no condition to embrace this call, but rather repentance unto life of which the scripture speaketh is the fruit of the gospel embraced.— The reader it is hoped will not suppose that the following observations are calculated to discountenance the use of the moral law in order to conversion : if this had been the case, so much had not been said on that head ; but rather to manifest it to be exceeding useful in shewing mankind as in a glass their guilt and misery, not to qualify and make them meet for the gospel, but to prompt them to embrace it through a consciousness of their necessity and danger. It may be asked if these things have been handled by so many, what need of publishing more ? To the person so questioning let it be replied, that though the things maintained in the ensuing treatise have been affirmed repeatedly by authors of no small credit, yet have they

they been particularly treated but by few. It is observed *M. Culverwell* labored as much as any man to set forth the gospel call or warrant in a true light, but I suppose his *Treatise* thereon can at present be scarcely procured; having myself endeavored to obtain a sight thereof, but to no purpose. Wherefore as the particulars following, though allowed and inculcated, have been for the most part rather hinted at than explained and proved, I thought the following performance (mean and indifferent as it is) might be of some use, considering what proneness is in every man when awakened, to seek for some qualification, whereby he may be entitled to embrace Christ and his salvation; and what aptitude there is in the hearts of the Lord's people to stand at a distance from the Savior, until they can find some encouragement within them to draw near. To conclude. If thou, whoever thou art, that readest the succeeding lines be but truly concerned to know thyself, solicitous to be acquainted with the Prince of life and glory, and to know him in an especial and saving manner, thou then wilt be engaged in sincere and hearty prayer to the Lord, that thou mayest be guided into all truth, preserved from every error, and wilt not condemn what thou readest, unless thou canst warrantably disprove it: but on the contrary if thou shouldst be one who art well acquainted with thyself and the Lord, I trust thou wilt be led to confess, that what is therein contained is agreeable to the sacred oracles; and be still desirous to grow daily in an experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. That this may be thy happy case is the sincere desire of

The AUTHOR.

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The INTRODUCTION.

Rom. i. 5, 6. By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name. Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.

IF we are induced to make an industrious enquiry into the nature of the means conducive to any particular, valuable, and important end, it must be necessarily concluded that persons so inclined have at least some apprehensions of that end; and though it may not amount to a perspicuous perception of the nature and excellence thereof, yet at least to a striking apprehension that it is both interesting and important. As the subject of the ensuing enquiry is not so much the calling treated of in the above quoted passage out of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, as of the means leading thereto; yet it will be necessary to observe, that the calling he therein treats of is not a calling to any particular office either in church or state, as expressed in the 1 Cor. vii. 20, "Let every man abide in the same calling, &c." neither is it the gospel, or ministerial call only, for respecting

respecting persons so called, it is said, *Matt. xx. 16, Many be called, but few chosen*; but it is rather

I. A saving apprehension of Christ by faith, through the effectual operation of the divine Spirit. And

II. The indwelling of the same divine agent, mortifying and crucifying the old man with his deeds; and raising the soul to a spiritual and heavenly life, which is begun through the saving apprehension of Christ (as before observed) and will at last be perfected in glory.

This end being so glorious, and replete with excellence, before we enter upon our inquiry, let us consider what is man's state, as he is now introduced upon the present stage of existence.—What his inclination, aims, and desires; and whether he be naturally inclined to such aspirations as are demonstrative of this calling? Methinks I may safely say, not so; but rather very far from it.

For man as he is born into the world is under condemnation, even of him who is his creator, maintainer, and preserver; and consequently before one actual sin is committed, may be righteously consigned over to eternal death: that this is not a rash assertion may be proved from what the great apostle of the Gentiles affirms, not only of the believing Ephesians, but of himself and his brethren

brethren the apostles, declaring they were all by nature the children of wrath, (that is) as they came into the world (according to the appointment of God) by natural generation; the cause of which awful state the same apostle shews in *Rom.* v. 12. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, (or as in the margin of the Bible) in whom all have sinned:" evidently establishing this grand point of doctrine, that every son and daughter of Adam is considered by the eternal Jehovah as much guilty of this first transgression, as if each individual had really then existed, stood in covenant with God for himself only, and transgressed as Adam did. This the human heart is very disinclined to believe, and militates much against; yet certainly it is both the privilege and duty of every regenerated son and daughter of Adam firmly to credit and maintain, as the whole doctrine of redemption depends thereon; and to be assured thereof, because the lip of truth hath revealed it; considering it not as a matter of experience, but of faith. Surely to be condemned by God as soon as we exist, to be then exposed to the curse of his law, and liable continually through our whole life to the everlasting displeasure of him, who created, and who alone maintains and preserves us, is an alarming consideration; feeling,

ing, when he please, he may cease so to do, the consequence whereof, unless interested in his favor through the merits of Christ, must be everlasting destruction.

Respecting the pollution of our inclinations, aims and desires, let us hear what the psalmist David saith, *Psal. li. 5, Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*, which words by the apostle in the afore-cited passage to the Romans, may be considered as explained by the following clause, "and death by sin," pointing out a spiritual death, or such a total depravation of the powers of the soul of man, that instead of being engaged for God are engaged against him; this is plain by comparing the said passage with *Ephes. ii. 1, and 5*. Certainly if this be the case of mankind in general, if they be not only condemned for their first offence in Adam, but in consequence thereof coming into the world are wholly dead to God, (that is) in all their powers and faculties disinclined from him, and inclined to sin, and are thereby rendered liable to a greater condemnation; if this be the case it may well account for their practical offences, and shew how it is they are so easily led away by the grand adversary of souls on every temptation; and clearly manifest that as the alienation of mankind from God took place in their first foederal head, that this alienation must be continually increasing by their prac-

tical iniquities, (being the corrupt streams which flow from that polluted fountain they derive from him) and consequently thereby accu-
 themselves wrath against the day of wrath and
 judgment.

The above reflection on man's state by nature, naturally serves to introduce the following inquiry, viz. Whether the law of God though in the hand of the Spirit, entirely exclusive of the gospel, can instate a man again into the divine favor, and confer upon him such power, as to make his services in any measure acceptable? To prove its insufficiency,

I. It must be observed that the law (that is, the moral law) of itself hath lost its power to convince the conscience.

II. That it is only efficacious to this end, but as in the hand of the Divine Spirit.

III. That when so administered, it is only for condemnation and not calculated to justify.

First, It is to be observed, that the law hath lost its power, through the fall, of itself to convict the conscience. This will appear if we consult *Exodus* vii. 3, and 10th. "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs, and my wonders in the land of Egypt. And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he hearkened not unto them." It is not to be supposed without blasphemy, that the

Lord

Lord (through any divine operation) wrought such an effect upon him; but withholding his influence, those means which in themselves were materially sufficient became useless to convince him of the majesty, power, dominion and sovereignty of the Lord, by whose power the miracles wrought were effected, and how meet it was he should obey his voice in letting his people go: therefore all hardness of heart is the consequence of the Lord the Spirit ceasing to operate, by his own appointed means of conviction and terror, to keep back the children of men from evil, or to alarm their consciences when the same hath been perpetrated; which is no injustice done inasmuch as the greatest obduracy is nothing more than the fruit and effect of our apostacy from God in our first covenant head, but generally is permitted in proportion to the atrociousness and permanency of practical offence: for confirmation hereof see *Sam. ix. 25. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.* Of this sentiment was that excellent divine Mr. William Perkins, as may be seen in his first vol. p. 722. *The Lord saith of Pharaoh, I will harden his heart, and this he is said to do, not because he sets and imprints hardness in his heart, but because by sundry actions he orders and governs his wicked will, and they are four.—First he permits Pharaoh to his own will. Secondly*
he

“ he leaves him to the malice of the devil, and
 “ the lusts of his own heart. Thirdly, he urges
 “ him with a commandment to let the people go.
 “ Lastly, God useth the hardness of Pharaoh’s
 “ heart to the manifestation of his own justice
 “ and judgment.”

Secondly, The law is only efficacious as in the hand of the divine Spirit to convince the conscience.

If this be denied how shall we account for the various dispositions of natural men with respect to sin, and as touching their moral behaviour? It may be answered, some men are favored with a better education than others; that they are so circumstanced in Providence; and the rule of their duty being inculcated on them, they are excited to a greater fear and reverence of God than others, who are deprived of these privileges. If this reply be conclusive, every man’s moral conduct will necessarily be in proportion to his knowledge of the rule of his duty: but may we not say, are there not many instances where men have been called by office to a constant dispensation of God’s word, have professionally been teachers of others, and yet have manifested by far a greater obduracy than many natural men, who have not been favored with the hundredth part of the means of instruction the former have been? This can in no wise be attributed to a disparity in natural, neither

neither in acquired abilities; as every one must own the former generally have in both respects by far the superiority. To what then can we refer it but to the divine rule and government, God by his Spirit working in the consciences of all men as the sovereign of his own law, applying it with more or less efficacy according to his own all-wise and gracious designs and purposes? Of this opinion was that excellent divine *John Cameron*, as appears by his comment on *Rom. viii. 15*, speaking of the restraint some men are under, says, "A powerful restraint of this sort begotten
 " in the mind of man (void in every respect of
 " the grace of God) through a certain knowledge
 " of the divine law, and of the judgments of God
 " (which rest indeed upon the wicked), shining
 " into his understanding by the Holy Spirit, in
 " some measure keeps within bounds the violence
 " of his iniquities;" But to wave human testimony let us attend to what the scriptures of truth say on this point, let us hear what the wise man declares; *Prov. xviii. 14*, *The Spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* Perhaps it may be objected, this is no wise apposite; persons guilty of flagrant iniquities, such as murder, blasphemy, and such like, will be the subjects of this bitterness of soul, and not others; but is this always the case with the former? If not, what is the reason? Do they
 not

not know these are sins against God? If they do,
 why do they not fear? The reason must be, the
 spirit of the Lord charges the consciences of some
 men with those crimes (of which they are guilty)
 in a very powerful and awful manner; and not in
 the same degree the consciences of others; and
 may it not be warrantably affirmed, that the same
 divine agent hath an undoubted right to witness
 to this vicegerent within us, the guilt we have
 contracted by our every breach of the divine law,
 and the penalty on that account we are liable to?
 Is not his every command and prohibition guarded
 by the same sanction? Is not the law of the same
 almighty and divine governor broke as well by
 the violation of one command as another? Is not
 the infinitely pure and righteous God tenacious of
 his honor in respect to all his injunctions? Hath
 he given a dispensation to any of his creatures of
 the human species to disobey him with impunity?
 Surely no! How then shall we account for the in-
 numerable daily instances of rebellion against God
 that every son and daughter of Adam stands
 charged with by the law and justice of God, and
 yet is almost if not altogether unconscious and in-
 sensible thereof? Indeed we must say that stupi-
 dity, insensibility, unbelief, pride, and self-pleas-
 ing have seized us; and that man hath such a pro-
 pensity to self, the creatures around, and to a
 seeking happiness here below, that he is unmin-
 ful

ful of God, and his authority; and is neither restrained by the law of God from offending his maker and preserver, nor convicted of his transgressions after commission, but as the spirit of God, the Lord and giver of the law applies it by his almighty power to the conscience. If this was the case with the heathen world in respect to natural religion, why may it not be so, with mankind where God's written law is promulgated? That the case was such with the former, is evident from *Rom. i. 21.* and following verses. — "Because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own body between themselves, &c." — And that the latter is not exempted, consult the 2d chapter of the same epistle particularly from verse the 17th to the end; nay the same apostle in his 2d epistle to the *Corinthians*, chap. iii. ver. 5. declares that, *We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* Yea and the idolatries of the children of Israel, the Lord's own people, when

when extraordinary signs and wonders were wrought among them, and the oracles of truth were continually proclaimed unto them, is no small additional proof of what is before asserted: for a further confirmation of which consult the noted *Zancky*, vol. iv. page 99. Thesis 4th.

Thirdly, That when the law is efficaciously administered by the divine Spirit, it is only to condemnation.

Agreeably to what was before observed "by being efficaciously administered" may be understood an administration thereof, according to the allwise ends and purposes of God, respecting the government of the world, the benefit of community, the maintenance of the church, and the conviction of his people; all which he effects not only by working in the hearts of his chosen, but also powerfully in the conscience of the unregenerate, who may never be brought to a spiritual acquaintance with Christ: this is clear on first reflection; for what an awful appearance would this world make without it? What anarchy, confusion, and destruction would take place! What would become of property, habitation, nay of cities and kingdoms, and consequently of any connection one with another? Certainly man would find those of his own species his greatest enemies, and most to be dreaded and avoided.

But

But to proceed. As the concerns of the future are of greater importance than those of the present state, therefore speaking of the law, we say, by its being efficaciously administered is rather intended shewing a man himself, and how he stands in the sight of God, whether approved of by him, or under his displeasure. We are to consider the subject of this illumination not under grace, but the law; by which state is understood a being obliged to an unflinching conformity to all its requirements in a way of obedience, and a full satisfaction for offences committed. To this purpose Paul speaks, *Rom. iii. 19. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law.*—Wherefore the administration of the divine Spirit must be considered according to the state the man is under, (for hereof alone we are now treating) the inquiry then will be, doth the Spirit of the Lord give testimony to such a man that he is in the divine favor on account of any action of his? Or is there such a rectitude in the very best thought a man to circumstanced can conceive, as will procure a testimony from him who cannot lie? In answer let it be observed, that the voice of the law in the scripture is the voice of God, and consequently of the Holy Ghost, because holy men of old spake as they were moved by him. As the third divine person in the ever-blessed Trinity is of the same incomprehensible essence with the Fa-

ther and the Son, his voice in the conscience, of any human creature cannot be contrary to that of the law : attend we therefore to what the law saith, *Gal. iii. 10. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* This single scripture will serve instead of many, as therein is declared that, unless every son and daughter of Adam hath doth, and ever shall yield a full satisfaction to the demands of the law of God : the law approves not and therefore doth not acquit, but for ever precludes from all true peace of conscience, yea rather curses and condemns : wherefore we may well conclude whoever it so treats will also be thus treated by the infinitely just and righteous Jehovah, when such a one quits his tabernacle of flesh, if before that awful period he be not brought into a new covenant state, and made a partaker of Christ : how vain therefore are the hopes of the generality of mankind ? Where is the person who doth not more or less think to please God for his doings ? One conceives if he regard only equality in his dealings, he shall do well ; another if he attend his church, the Lord will accept him, whatever his character otherwise may be ; a third who makes conscience of private prayer concludes he must be the religious man, and therefore in the divine favor, notwithstanding he may be altogether

ther uninformed that the Lord requireth to be
 worshipped in spirit and in truth; the fourth aims
 at an universal consistency with the commands of
 God in his external conduct, and hesitates not to
 conclude that he (if any) must be the character the
 Lord approves, not considering that the law is
 spiritual, (that is) it takes not cognizance only of
 the outward behaviour of the children of men,
 but regards their hearts, requires truth in the in-
 ward parts, and expects an entire suitableness in
 heart and life. If this be the case what reason can
 be assigned for the various kinds, or rather,
 grounds of hope in men, who are seeking to please
 God by their performances? The answer is plain,
 the Spirit of the Lord operates on the hearts and
 consciences of men with different degrees of ener-
 gy, which may be counteracted by the corruption
 in the heart common to all, and by the tempta-
 tions of satan to which the mind is subject; which
 when the Lord permits may be too powerful, and
 encourage in a fallacious and deceptive expectation
 of divine favor, notwithstanding the testimony of
 the divine Spirit to the contrary, which is always
 in a greater or less degree to condemnation: this
 may suffice for an Introduction to the proposed
 enquiry, viz. what is the use and office of the
 moral law as in the hand of the divine Spirit;
 also the nature, publication, and instrumentality
 of the same divine agent to the effectual calling
 of sinners to the grace of God?

THE

**THE USE AND OFFICE OF THE MORAL LAW,
THROUGH THE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY
GHOST ON THE CONSCIENCES OF GOD'S
ELECT.**

CHAP. I.

*An Inquiry into the manner of the Divine Agency
through the Law, in order to effectual Calling.*

AS the inquiry contained in the close of our introduction is two-fold, the use of the law, and the use of the gospel, let us begin with the former. And

First, Are the operations of the divine Spirit to condemnation immediately answerable to saving purposes, or are they gradual?

Secondly, Doth that divine agent take the same method with all his elect people?

Thirdly, What are the ends he designs in his operations through the moral law, as an instrument?

First, Are the operations of the divine Spirit to condemnation, immediately answerable to saving purposes, or are they gradual?

First,

First, They are not immediately answerable to saving purposes, according to the Lord's general dealings with his people: because of the great ignorance of which the human heart is the subject, not only through the fall, but by means of multiplied practical offences: the Psalmist speaking of the wicked, *Psalm x. 4. saith, God is not in all his thoughts, or as in the margin of the Bible, All his thoughts are, there is no God.* If the very being or existence of God may be ambiguously regarded, how much more his attributes and properties? Surely to such what the apostle to the *Romans* saith, may be well applied, chap. iii. 18. *There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

Secondly, The convictions of the divine Spirit are not in general at once full and comprehensive, as they might amaze and swallow up, were that the case: for as our Lord dealt with his disciples, *John xvi. 12. I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;* so the Lord the Spirit is pleased to deal with the soul, that he may be rationally and solidly reprov'd, and be capable of concluding of the propriety on what he is pleased to shew him.

Thirdly, As wicked practices are more apparent to the mind of man than evil thoughts, and the heart naturally averse to all reproof, it is by experience

rience found, that souls are first brought under conviction of the sin of those practices, which the common consent of mankind condemn as iniquitous, before they enter the chambers of imagery, or know in any degree the wickedness and vile-ness that is within them; yet it is not intended hereby to deny the Lord's sovereignty, or to limit his power; seeing if he please he can cut short his work, and effectually convert the man to himself, under the same discourse by which he might be convicted; instances of this kind are left on record for the instruction and encouragement of them who should come after: such was the case of Lydia, *Acts* xvi. 14. the jailor, verse 16 to 21. and the thief on the cross, *Matt.* xxvii. 44. *John* xxiii. from the 40th to the 44th verse. Notwithstanding these proofs it may be safely affirmed, that for the most part the operations of the divine Spirit are gradual. Lamentable it is, not only to reflect on the darkness that envelopes the minds of men thro' their natural depravity, but more so to consider the increase of that darkness, by means of their practical iniquities, through which (without breach of charity it may be affirmed) they are scarcely convinced they are more than brutal, and that as the brute dies possibly they may die also. It will therefore be acknowledged that they who are savingly brought to an acquaintance with the truth, as it is in Jesus, are convinced that they are immortal with respect to
 . their

their souls, and as they are rational beings they must be accountable for the deeds done in the body, to him who gave them their existence: judging by the creation around them that the Lord must be infinite in power, and therefore capable of rewarding, or punishing, also unlimitedly just and righteous, as being the first cause of all things, and therefore will not wink at their transgressions: these considerations are increased by their occasional or more stated attendance on the preaching or reading of the word of God.

They consider also, the preciousness of their souls, and the awfulness of that eternity to which they are hastening: they say unto their souls, O my soul what thinkest thou will be the consequence of thy conduct? Art thou created for eternity? Canst thou reasonably hope for an everlasting state of blessedness, and guilty of such evil practices as thou daily art? Can a drunkard, an whoremonger, a liar, or suchlike enter the kingdom of heaven? Is it not said a companion of fools shall be destroyed? How then canst thou entertain any hope, that it shall go well with thee? On this the man perhaps alters his conduct, begins to reform, and when he is enabled to live more decent and orderly, he is apt to think it may yet be well with him, here many rest: but who can suppose that that conviction which is answerable to the demands of the law can or doth proceed

proceed no further? Therefore whoever thou art who hast experienced no greater degree of the Spirit's operation, in a way of legal illumination, than to influence thee to break off from thy notorious and scandalous practices, know that thou art lulled asleep in the arms of Satan, and the deceitful workings of thine own abominable and corrupted nature. Leaving these persons, we will inquire and say, doth the Spirit of the Lord leave his elect people here? It may be replied no, he shews them that God by his law, not only requires a decent and orderly life and conduct, but an universal conformity to his commands, and probably applieth that, or a like portion of scripture to their consciences, *James ii. 10. 11.* For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all: for he that said, do not commit adultery, said also do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. This alarms them fully, persuades their consciences they are yet in a state of condemnation, and in danger of perishing for ever; terrified hereby and considering the difficulty of their task, they pray unto the Lord both in private and public for grace to assist them in so extensive and laborious an undertaking, and now apply themselves with much assiduity to an universal and uniform practice of what they apprehend the Lord enjoins: (not ap-
prized

prized of any requirements beyond an outward conformity to the injunctions of the law) proceeding on this principle they cannot but be conscious of manifold and frequent failures: to remedy this evil they conceive repentance is not only required but will entitle them to the merits of Christ; hereupon they endeavor to reflect on all the sins of commission they have been guilty of, omissions of duty they are chargeable with, and lament with tears these their iniquities, pray for mercy, and finally conclude Christ's merits certainly are available for the remission of them, purposing to be more watchful and strict, and perhaps vow unto the Lord they will be obedient in all things in future, his grace assisting them. Thus they may go on for some considerable time sinning and repenting, till that Spirit of truth by whom the scriptures of truth were written, shew them they are very far from pleasing God; for although they be only observant of the things around them and conversant with sensible and external objects to the exclusion of an internal self reflection, the divine Spirit shews them that the Lord looks further than to the outward conduct, as it is he who searches the heart. This he convinces them of by such or the like scriptures as *Jer. xviii. 10. I the Lord search the heart; I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings;* or *John iv. 24. God is a spirit, and they that worship*
only D *him*

him must worship him in spirit and in truth. This at once sinks all their hopes, they are apt to say within themselves who is sufficient for these things? Concluding it must be so, viz. that the Lord seeth not as man sees, looking on the heart and not on the outward appearance only, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. they at last acknowledge that to the present moment they have had no solid ground of hope that the Lord is reconciled to them, inasmuch as the whole stream of their obedience has been without any proper source from whence it should flow: what shall they do in this case is the question with them. Dismayed at the exceeding greatness of the attempt, not only of an external but an internal conformity to the law of God, they are almost ready to give up all hope of being saved, as no man possibly can fulfil a task so difficult; now that divine agent who first alarmed them, brings to their minds with still greater power the awfulness of eternity, the exceeding preciousness of their souls, the uncertainty of their lives, and the great jeopardy and danger they are in of dropping into everlasting misery: hereupon they at once awake out of their lethargy, no longer hesitate whether they shall go forward or not, but are stimulated more than ever to that diligence, without which they apprehend they certainly shall not escape eternal torment; now they begin indeed to seek the Lord, they call earnestly upon him, as such
 who

who are convinced their all is at stake, they now watch their hearts, consider their disposition towards God and towards man, labour to have their minds pure from all corrupt imaginations, and aim to love both their creator; and those who are around them; they strive to be the subjects of every social virtue, and to manifest every temper which may be denominated truly amiable, aspiring to nothing short of an universality of obedience to the divine law, respecting their duty both to God and man, and not external only but in and from the heart; at this Satan is much alarmed.— Now is the soul become the object of his particular attention, and the subject of his grievous temptations: atheistical and blasphemous thoughts are now suggested, doubts concerning the authenticity of divine writ injected, innumerable objects presented to the imagination to corrupt and defile it, conscience tortured with accusations; yet is the man seeking by his conformity (not simply as before in an external manner only but in heart also) to the law of God, to recommend himself to the divine favor; and if not to render himself worthy, yet at least to qualify himself to be a partaker of the merits of Christ. Wherefore on his failures from time to time (for many he is conscious of) he renews his repentance, calls to remembrance his sins, and upon his supposed hearty sorrows, and solemn vows of stricter care and watch-

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fulness,

fulness, he concludes that the Lord forgives him for Christ's sake, and that in his merits he must be interested: for who, says he, should be partakers of so great a blessing, but such who truly repent of their sins, aim and labour to obey God, both in heart and life? Notwithstanding, all this the Spirit of the Lord leaves not the souls of his people here, but secretly questions whether they do in reality love the Lord; if it be not doubtful; supposing the dread of everlasting wrath were removed whether they would persevere a step farther in the ways and commands of God; and at last shews them that the law requires a disinterested love to the Lord, not from a fear of his displeasure, but for himself; and then brings close to the conscience the following portions, or others suitable thereto. *Deut. xxvii. 26.* "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of the law to do them. 28, 45, and 47: Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, 'till thou be destroyed: because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments, and his statutes which he commanded thee. And they shall be upon thee for a sign, and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and gladness of heart." Now they are beat out of all their hopes; these injunctions and threatnings instead

instead of begetting in them the pure and genuine love and obedience before spoken of they become very well acquainted with what Paul intends, *Rom. viii. 5.* For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death; and verse 8. But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, and therefore begin truly to despair of attaining everlasting life by a legal righteousness, and are made sensible that the nature within them will not admit thereof, confirming by experience the testimony of the sacred oracles. *Rom. viii. 7.* The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. As the present enquiry concerns the law only administered by the Spirit, we shall (the soul so convinced as aforesaid) prosecute this head no further, but proceed to our second head, viz. Doth the Spirit of the Lord take the same method with all his elect people in his legal operations on their hearts? (that is) with respect to degree and time.

To say he doth would contribute not a little to grieve those, whom the Lord would have made glad; and administer matter of doubt to many, of their effectual calling, who have the greatest cause to claim interest in so admirable a blessing; conclude we then in the negative. Surely while a Lydia, the jaylor, the dying thief, and the Lord's dealings with

with them stand on divine record, the conclusion will be found just and true; for who dare limit the Holy One of Israel? Can he not do by his own as pleases him? Is his arm shortened, that he cannot (if agreeable to his will) convince as well instantaneously, as in a day, a month, a year, or in many years? Undoubtedly he can. Wherefore as this assertion is controverted but by few, who are taught the truth as it is in Jesus, we will conclude this chapter, and pass on to the third particular proposed.

CH. AL. PA. II.

The End and Design of the Holy Spirit in his Operations on the Elect, by the Moral Law as an Instrument.

HAVING in the preceding chapter inquired into the manner of the divine agency through the law in order to effectual calling; what remains is an answer to the following question, viz.

What are the ends the Lord the Spirit designs in his operations through the moral law as an instrument?

A reply to this inquiry hath been hinted at by many preceding observations; nevertheless let us investigate, or search out

First,

First, Negatively, what he doth not design.

Secondly, What he intendeth.

First, He designs not by his illumination in the hearts of his elect people, through the law, to present them acceptable to God, or to justify them, viz. 1st, either in their practice, 2dly, in their thoughts and cogitations, 3dly, or in their nature morally considered.

First, By his legal operations he justifies them not in their practice ; or rather, he declares them not just. Indeed their practices may not be so vile as those of others in consequence of these operations, this is the ground of most men's hope : they hope to be saved, not so much on account of their goodness, but because others surpass them in wickedness. As for our part say they, though we be drunkards, rioters, or even adulterers, yet we are honest hearted, mean no man evil ; the character of the cunning, deceitful, insidious, and treacherous man belongs not to us : we are open, free, generous, and speak our minds, and hope therefore God will accept us, though we be not so four, starch, and precise as some religious hypocrites, who doubtless are wicked enough in private. This is the language of the debauchee, and what is called the pretty gentleman, and how many adopt the like sentiment of themselves, who

run

run not to the same excess in iniquity, a very small acquaintance with mankind will shew ; but however men in general flatter themselves, the Spirit of the Lord will not, for he is a Spirit of truth : indeed neither the word nor Spirit can or will condemn a man for iniquities, of which he is not guilty, for the open perpetration of crimes he never committed. Yet this implies not but he may be in the sight of God, a sinner far more atrocious ; therefore unless a man be in reality perfectly conformable to the law of God in his external conduct, this ever-blessed, faithful, and divine agent will afford no such witness, and consequently he bestows no such testimony to the consciences of his people by the instrumentality of the law ; for the words of our Lord spoken on another account will be valid in this, *Joh. xvi. 13. When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.*

Secondly, He justifies not their thoughts and cogitations, and consequently not the subjects of them : for confirmation hereof attend we to what the Lord himself declares, *Gen. viii. 21. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* As also to chap. vi. ver. 5. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* Which scriptures compared with the surrounding contexts respectively, every judicious and considerate person must allow, describe mankind

kind unbreivably; not only before but after the deluge; even to the end of time, to be wholly corrupt even in their inmost thoughts; which truth the great apostle of the Gentiles perspicuously evinces by his declaration, *Rom. vii. 14* *We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.* For if this was the case with that eminent man of God, who then will be so bold as to exempt himself? However it may be the apprehension of some, that they are exempted; whatever fallacious notions they may have of their own hearts; the Lord the Spirit will not leave those unto whom he intends to manifest gospel truths with a saving efficacy, under such a delusion. This divine agent will shew them, that their hearts are full of the abominations he himself hath declared, by applying his law with so powerful an energy, as to convince them thereof in such a degree, that they shall at least confess it to the Lord, if not to those around them.

If this be the case of all mankind, what will become of the hopes of the formalist? The man who pays no further attention, than to his outward conduct? Alas! What will all his religious attendances; what will all his private devotions avail him? Can these be pure, if his heart be corrupt? Are not the actions of every rational creature the effects of his cogitations? May we not ask another question and say, what will become of all

his boasted civility, honesty, and rectitude in his conduct (though he make conscience not only of his duty towards God, but man also) to those around him, if he pay no attention to his thoughts, and to the dispositions of his mind? May not actions materially good, and beneficial unto them to whom they are done, spring even from that mind which reflects not at all on God? Is not pride, vain glory, love of applause, self interest, not only the spring of action with respect to civil, but religious matters also? And are not these the prevailing principles in the world? But admitting a man's external conformity to the law of God would justify him, where is the man who hath obeyed (even in this sense) in all things during his whole life, nay for a year, a month, or a week? or can any man say, he hath externally been obedient in all things even for a day? If not, what will become of such proud pretensions as some boast of? Surely they are vain and delusory, arising from a corrupted mind, which is blinded by the great adversary of the human species!— Certain it is, there have been and without doubt still are self righteous persons, who aim both in thought and deed at a consistency with the divine injunctions; whose constant practice is an indefatigable endeavour to be in mind and conduct, what the Lord would have them, according to their legal apprehensions of his will. Will not the Lord the

the Spirit justify in conscience such? Will not he afford to them his testimony, that they please the Lord? If they be precluded from this inestimable blessing, who then is to enjoy it? The answer is, *Whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, Rom. iii. 19.* And what doth the law say? Why it saith, *Gal. iii. 10. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;* and admitting the law to be spiritual, extending to the thoughts of the heart, the answer must be by all esteemed satisfactory; unless it can be supposed the lawgiver should give testimony contrary to his own law. Having now clearly shewn that no man is perfect in his outward conduct, it will follow secondly, that no man always thinks on, and considers the things he is enjoined, but allowing a person should attain to this, yet the divine Spirit would convince such a person (if one of his elect people) that the Lord regards the nature of our religious thoughts, as well as demands the existence of them, and expects that our actions should arise from a mind wholly inclined to obedience, and not only so, but inclined by a supreme love to our Creator, chiefly on account of his loveliness; this corrupt nature can never do, therefore the Spirit of the Lord in the court of conscience will not justify the person of such, since *Rom. viii. 7, 8.* "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not sub-

ject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Thirdly, Neither is it the purpose of the Holy Ghost, in the illumination of the mind by the law, to declare a rectitude in the nature of fallen man.

The former conclusions being granted, this position will be readily allowed; if there were no corrupt principle within, if the principle within be pure, if the heart and nature were rightly set, whence should arise this alienation from God, and propensity to the creature; yea, that hatred to the Lord and his ways, and delight in the ways of iniquity, which the unregenerate are awful examples of, and to which the regenerate find within them a mighty bias, which would (without doubt) swallow them up, unless the Lord the Spirit did continually within them counteract it? But if notwithstanding, any one should think that this divine witness affords through the moral law any such declaration to the conscience, let him not so conclude, unless he can produce some passage out of sacred writ to prove it.

Come we now to the inquiry, what the Lord intendeth by his operations on the consciences of his people through the moral law as an instrument.

First, His grand and chief purpose is to condemn.

Secondly, The manner in which it is effected is to make sin bitter.

First,

First, His grand and chief purpose is to condemn, not everlastingly, but to convince the man, who is the subject of his operations, and whom he intends to save, that he is in a state of condemnation. The reason hereof is, because every man through corrupt nature is inclined to hope for happiness in a future state, from considerations which are not founded on truth. The heathen have their hope, so have the Mahometans and Jews, which if scrutiny were to be made into it, would be found fundamentally analogous to the hope of him, who is but a Christian in profession; (that is) they all expect to be saved by their sincere conformity to the law of their sect, to which they respectively appertain. As the subject of the present inquiry is not, whether the Spirit of the Lord doth testify to any man's conscience in this life, that God is pacified towards him, (for this undoubtedly he doth to many, even in this state of existence, through the compleat redemption of Christ, only apprehended by faith;) but whether this divine agent works any such persuasion thro' the instrumentality of the moral law. Leaving therefore for a season a further enlargement on the observation made in the preceding paragraph, viz. that every man by nature builds his hopes for eternal happiness on a false foundation, let us therefore attempt to investigate, whether the above assertion can be proved by the unerring word

word, viz. that the grand and chief purpose of the Lord the Spirit in the hearts of his people by the instrumentality of the moral law is always and invariably to condemn, and never to justify. If this be denied then are we justified by the law, but what saith the scripture. *Rom. iii. 19, 20. — That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; and as if the apostle or the Spirit of God by him would signify his abhorrence to such a supposition, adds the following words, For by the law is the knowledge of sin; evidently declaring, that all men (at all times are the subjects of sin; that the law is an instrument to discover it unto them; that they who are not ingrafted into Christ are under the guilt thereof, and consequently under its most righteous condemnation. This may be further confirmed by the 15th verse of the following chapter:—Because the law worketh wrath; add to this the testimony of our Lord, John iii. 18. speaking of himself, He that believeth on him, is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already. Why doth our Lord so speak? The answer is plain, because such a person stands answerable for himself, hath no mediator, no savior, is not interested at present in him who came to make full satisfaction to divine justice for the sins of all those who believe in him, for they who do believe are*

not

not under the law : if then our Lord testifies they are in a condemned state, can it be thought the divine Spirit will witness to their consciences, that they are in a justified state, through their own personal righteousness ? By no means ! Again. — What saith the apostle, *2 Cor. iii. 9.* For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, if the law be a ministration of condemnation, how can any man expect it in the hand of the divine Spirit, as a ministration of righteousness, peace, joy, and comfort, be his supposed attainments ever so great ? Though it was the experience of this great apostle to delight in the law of God after the inward man, *Rom. vii. 22.* yet was not his hope built thereon, as evidently appears by the last verse of that chapter, and is also clearly elucidated in the beginning thereof, nay it is thereby made manifest, that he together with all who had then believed, were previous to their faith alive unto the law, the consequence of which may be observed verses 5 and 10 to be death, that is, a state of death, and therefore under condemnation. Similar to this David speaketh, *Psal. cxliii. 2.* — Enter not into judgment with thy servant ; (he adds a reason) for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. If not justified then condemned. However we do not suppose the penman of these words was in a condemned, but a justified state : therefore his intention must be in opposition to the practice of all

all self-righteous persons, that: the Lord would not look upon him according to what he was, either in heart or practice, but appear for him according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses, and tender mercies: for if the Lord, he thought, should treat him in correspondence to what his pure eyes beheld within and done by him, he must necessarily fall under his eternal displeasure, and not only himself, but to man living could abide the search and scrutiny of him who is infinitely just and holy. Thus to this part the words of Job, whose character the Lord himself described, by declaring him a man to whom there was none to be compared, a perfect and upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil, Job 1. 1. yet let us hear what he saith on this matter, chap. ix. verse 20. to the 22. 40. 41. If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall speak condemnation, if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse: though I were perfect, ye would not know me, my soul: I would despise my life, & this is one thing, therefore I hold it, he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. These testimonies sufficiently evince the point in hand, without addition of further proof, yet let it be concluded with the following passages, Rom. 7. 20. I and mine almes. Moreover when I have entered, that the offence might abound. Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working

ing death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." As then the word of truth and veracity, not of man, but of God, has determined this matter; how comes it to pass that the hope and expectation before taken notice of should naturally possess the breast of every man? In reply to this question we may observe, that there is a true hope, which springs from an unfeigned faith, confidence, and reliance on the promise of God through Christ alone; this is a foundation in direct opposition to the law, *Rom. iii. 27, 28*. But the natural man's hope is built on a supposed conformity either to God's law, or to a law conceived to be from him: therefore as before observed, the heathen have their hope, yet not founded on their conformity to the written law of God, for they have it not, but to the law of nature, and to the idolatrous rites and customs established amongst them. The like observation may be advanced in relation to the Mahometans respecting their Alcoran, and the rites instituted by their great prophet. The Jews depend on their obedience to the moral and ceremonial law of God, though therein shamefully deficient; and nominal christians in general (atheists and deists who go under that name excepted) on Christ: if they do so, may it not be objected they shall do well? Are not they who trust in Christ to be saved? In reply to such que-

rists let it be answered, that these christians before mentioned depend on the law too ; they hope by their righteousness (whether peculiarly strict or singularly licentious) to be qualified for an interest in the merits of Christ's death, and perhaps in his righteousness also, judging whatever defects attend their obedience, the merits of Christ will make ample amends to the justice of God, in order that they may be received to his favor either on account of their good deeds and service, or perhaps it may be, because they have not been guilty of as many slips as others. . . . Alas, what a mistake is here in a point so momentous as the eternal state of the soul ! How do such persons reflect on the attributes and perfections of God ? Or do they reflect at all ? Is not every excellency in God essential to him ? Is it not himself ? Is he not an infinite being ? If his attributes cannot be considered in him as qualities or endowments, as the properties of creatures are, without all question they must be infinite ; therefore his purity and holiness, justice, truth, mercy, love, and goodness must be so too. Could it be supposed that the Lord created man, and designed him for no end, rational creatures might have some shadow of reason for entertaining such hopes as before noticed ; but how unworthy is such a thought of God ! Shall not that man who begins a piece of work, without first fixing on the end for which he begun

begun it, be esteemed by all a very weak person :
 why then should not every one be persuaded that
 infinite wisdom does nothing but for an end an-
 swerable to its dignity ? If angelic creatures are
 brought into existence, to what end is this but to
 love, fear and reverence him who created them,
 and to declare his infinite goodness, according to
 their creature capacity ? To be indifferent in their
 praise or service would be criminal. Was not
 man in a state of rectitude obliged to the same
 homage and thankfulness ? Was there the least
 deficiency in Adam's worship, that the law of
 creation demanded ? If not, how then is it that we
 imagine God should be satisfied with our imperfect
 services ? The laws of an earthly prince change
 not through the transgressions of offenders ; what
 though thousands (through their evil propensity)
 object to his injunctions or prohibitions, do not
 they still abide unaltered, and their penalty take
 place, without any respect to the excuses of of-
 fenders ? If this be the case with regard to human
 laws, and all men judge it equitable so to be,
 how is it we conceive that the Lord will be now
 satisfied with an obedience short of what his law
 requires, because we through the sin of our first
 federal head Adam have lost our power of yield-
 ing that conformity which it demands ? Therefore
 it is evident the recovery of fallen man must be in
 every respect satisfactory to the law, and honor-

able to the justice and righteousness of the law-giver; nay God's glory being the chief end in man's salvation, how can this be effected but in the display of the infinite purity, justice, love and mercy of the eternal Jehovah in the accomplishment thereof? For the glory of the Lord, what is it but the manifestation of himself, when considered with reference to creatures? Can therefore the pagan idolater glorify God by his hope? If he hath violated the natural law under which he is (and that he hath there is no doubt) how shall the justice of God be satisfied for his offences, who is without Christ, and to whom his righteousness is not known, much less imputed? For we have no reason from scripture to believe that adults without any knowledge of Christ, can be in a state of salvation, but rather the contrary, *Psalm lxxix. 6. Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. Acts iv. 12. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* To corroborate which sentiment let us hear what the Church of England declares.—Article 18. “ They also are to be had accursed, “ that presume to say, that every man shall be “ saved by the law or sect which he professeth, for “ that he be diligent to frame his life according to “ that law and the light of nature. For holy “ scripture

"scripture doth set out unto us only the name of
 "Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved."—
 Leaving therefore the pagan we would further
 say, can the hope of the Mahometan, or Jew glo-
 rify God, the former preferring the figments of
 an impostor to the salvation of Christ, and the
 latter denying the savior of mankind? Or do they
 not both stand in need of a Savior? Did they
 never offend, or were they never deficient in their
 obedience even to the law of nature? Come we
 now to the self righteous christian. Does his hope
 glorify the Lord? Let us again consider the foun-
 dation of it. He hath been, and still is an open
 prophane person, but he is not so bad as others;
 therefore he expects mercy through Christ; on
 what is this expectation grounded? Not on Christ
 as a complete sacrifice for sin, but on the conside-
 ration of others being viler than him. Others
 there are who conceive such an hope will not do,
 they must repent, be heartily sorry for their ini-
 quities, amend and reform their lives, God then
 will accept them through a mediator: perhaps
 some may be found who are persuaded that the
 Lord is a searcher of the heart, and trier of the
 reins of the children of men, and therefore such
 think they must not only repent of their evil acti-
 ons, but of their evil thoughts also, and are not
 contented with amendment of life only, but are
 also laboring for rectitude of heart: hence they
 conclude

conclude God will have mercy on them for his Son's sake. But suppose we make the following inquiry, to whom do the benefits of Christ's redemption extend : They reply to all ; to every son and daughter of Adam ; God forbid it should be otherwise. Did not Christ die for the world ? Did not he give himself for mankind ? But what if we further question such persons, do you believe that every individual son and daughter of Adam shall be saved, or do you believe that any for whom Christ died shall be lost ? They answer, we believe he died for mankind universally ; notwithstanding which, says the prophane christian, if I had been so bad as such a one, alas ! I should have no hope ; and unless I had repented and amended my life says the outwardly decent man, how could I have expected salvation ? Would not my practice have been flatly against the word of truth ? *1 Cor. vi. 8, 9.* But surely the Lord is merciful to those who repent, and do the best they are able ! The third class is ready to say, is it not written, a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things. *Matt. xii. 35.* What availeth the sacrifice where the heart is not ? Is not the Lord a spirit ? Surely unless I had been truly sorry not only for my practical iniquities but my evil imaginations also, and had amended in both, and become another man, alas ! what would have become of me ! I know
not

not what such persons can think of Paul's declaration, *Heb. x. 14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,* (or separated:) by this passage it appears that they for whom the Lord offered himself are perfected: they must either say they were not perfected, and so deny the text, attributing the benefits of this offering to the removal of original guilt and pollution only, or call in question the sufficiency of the means by which they were perfected, and attribute to the subjects of this blessing a share therein, viz. on account of their repentance, amendment, &c. by which the offering spoken of became available.— If so common sense will draw the inference, viz. that the cause of salvation must be their repentance, amendment, &c. But if these things be not without sin, how can the infinite holiness, and justice of God be glorified thereby? Surely persons of these characters glorify not the Lord Jesus Christ by their hope, inasmuch as they conclude something must be added to what he hath done and suffered, to render his redemption complete; even the redemption of him who was no other than the eternal God: rather what a reflection on his wisdom, power, and goodness would it be to imagine he should stand in need of the holiness and righteousness of angels to render his undertaking available to the end designed by his infinite wisdom, how much less of the services of those
whom

he himself declares to be wholly flesh : viz. wholly sinful in all the powers of their souls, and consequently in all the actions of their lives before they be vitally united to him ! For what saith this Savior of mankind ? *John iii. 6. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.* Having therefore shewn and proved what the hope is which every fallen son and daughter of Adam possesses, let us enquire into its source. The apostle Paul declares of himself, as also of the believing *Philippians*, that neither he nor they had any such hope, chap. iii. verse 3.—*We are* (says this apostle) *the Circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* The word flesh in this passage will be found upon inquiry to intend all the privileges a natural man can enjoy, either respecting a civil or religious character, as also what he is capable of either internally or externally, that is, respecting the operations of mind, will, and other faculties of the soul, as also the fruit and effect of such operations in the conduct and behavior. This confidence the apostle disclaims, knowing that a corrupt fountain cannot emit pure streams, nor a poisonous root produce wholesome fruit. Had not this been his persuasion how could we have accounted for what he saith, *Ephes. ii. 5. Even when we were dead in sins* (even I Paul together with you believing *Ephesians*) *hath he* (viz. God) *quickened us together with Christ :*

Christ : he adds, *By grace ye are saved* : and in the 8th and 9th verses, *By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.* Compare this with *Rom. iv. 4.* *Now to him that worketh is the reward, not reckoned of grace, but of debt.* Doth it not appear from hence, the apostle was persuaded that all confidence in a man's goodness, holiness and rectitude touching acceptance with God; in his ability and power to perform spiritual acts of duty and worship antecedent to faith in the gospel for a free reconciliation (though such a one reject not altogether the redemption of Christ) is a confidence in a non-entity, in vanity, in a chimera of a depraved imagination through sin and the fall? Why does the apostle make use of this expression "in the flesh"? Because all confidence in a man's self springs immediately from pride (a principal member of the old man) *Rom. vi. 6.* There being no other source whence it can arise; of which truth if any one doubt, let him compare the following scriptures together: *John iii. 6.* *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*; verse the 18th, *He that believeth not is condemned already.* *John vi. 53.* *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you.* *Rom. iii. 18.* *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* *Rom. iv. 5.* *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the*
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ungodly,

ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Will not such a one find that these verses compared declare every man by nature to be wholly flesh, in a condemned state, and in order to have spiritual life manifested in them, they must believe with a faith, which excludes works altogether; and must come as ungodly persons in themselves, (having no worthiness to recommend them) to the Lord, whose determination it is to justify, not the righteous, but ungodly? Such an act of faith we may affirm, is the first effect of spiritual life, unless we can suppose acts arising from the new nature, previous to its being, which supposition is not only most absurd, but will be found very difficult to be reconciled with holy scripture, even with the aforecited portion, *John* vi. 53. as also with *Rom.* xiv. 23. and many other parts of the sacred oracles. From all which it appears that the hope now considered is a fleshly hope, that it is as much specifically a fruit of the flesh, as the vices mentioned *Gal.* vi. 19, are; because it is a presumptuous and vain expectation, without any warrant from the lip of truth. Did men in general, nay did even the Lord's people more attentively reflect hereon, what perplexity and evil would be avoided! But surely the old nature will by no means suffer it. It saith how can there possibly be any hope, where there is no personal conformity to the law? To expect favor from God without

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out a better heart, and behaviour is a self-deception. Hath not God commanded all men every where to repent? *Acts* xvii. 30, and doth not this imply, that if they so do and amend their lives there is hope? Thus the flesh, where the conscience is awakened will be prompting the soul not to turn to Christ alone, not to a reconciled God in him only, laying itself at the feet of pure and infinite mercy, will not influence it to come as a sinner to the complete righteousness of Jesus, authorised so to do, by the free promise of God to the chief of offenders, and on this foundation to build its hope for complete salvation, both from the guilt, and power of iniquity, (acknowledging it hath not even a good thought to plead in its own favor) but rather to qualify itself for God's mercy, and to seek even to God for grace to be rendered worthy of a share in the merits of his Son, or at least to be made meet for so great a privilege. From all which observations may it not be inferred, that the end the divine Spirit pursues through the law on the consciences of his people is, to shew them step by step that they have no solid ground for hope on the footing of a legal conformity, either in a greater or a less degree, to convince and thoroughly to persuade them, that after all their repentance, amendment, and seeming conversion of heart and life they still are sinners, altogether such, polluted in heart and

practice, and that they as yet never possessed the least conformity to the righteous law of God, even in their imaginary best seasons? If not, how shall we understand the apostle in his reasonings on this point? *Rom. iv. 13, 14. and following verses.* —“ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: (he adds a reason in the following verse) Because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression.” Now observe his inference. “ Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.” How full and conclusive is this argument! How cogent! Not only to prove that our legal obedience in no wise will entitle us to everlasting blessedness, but that it hath no share in the procurement thereof; if it had, why is grace and faith here opposed to the law? Why doth the apostle say in the fifth verse, *But to him that worketh not.* Why doth he ask that remarkable question, *Gal. ii. 17: But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.* Surely if some legal righteousness in us were necessary, either before or after faith in Christ; if this were requisite for justification, for the favor of

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of God, and to attain the blessings promised, let any unprejudiced person consider, whether in the apostle's opinion hereby signified it would not be a judging Christ's redemption incomplete, and consequently concluding so divine a personage the minister of sin. That this is the argument of this great apostle in these words, let the drift of the whole epistle be seriously weighed, and compared with other parts of his writings, but more particularly with that striking passage of his, *Rom. xi. 5, 6.* and it will sufficiently appear. "For, says he, even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if of grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work." What shall we say then, but with the apostle in the aforecited passage of his, *2 Cor. iii. 9.* that the law, though in the hand of the divine Spirit, is not a ministration of hope, but a ministration of condemnation, calculated for and used to the purpose only of slaying the power of self-righteousness, as elsewhere expressed by him, *viz. Rom. x. 9. But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* Respecting human authority, in reference to this point, who so worthy as *Martin Luther*, that great reformer of Europe from popery to be consulted? Let us hear what he says. Fol. 152 of his *Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians*,—

tians. Another use of the law is divine and
 "spiritual, which is (as Paul sayeth) to increase
 "transgressions, that is to say, to reveal unto
 "man his sin, his blindness, his misery, his im-
 "piety, ignorance, hatred, and contempt of
 "God, death, hell, the judgment and deserved
 "wrath of God. Of this use the apostle intreat-
 "eth notably in the 7th to the Romans. This is
 "altogether unknown to hypocrites, to the po-
 "pish sophisters and school divines, and to all that
 "walk in the opinion of the righteousness of the
 "law, or their own righteousness. But to the
 "end that God might bridle and beat down this
 "monster and this mad beast (I mean the pre-
 "sumption of man's righteousness and religion)
 "which naturally maketh men proud, and puffeth
 "them up in such sort, that they think them-
 "selves thereby to please God highly: it behov-
 "ed him to send some Hercules which might set
 "upon this monster with all force and courage to
 "overthrow him, and utterly to destroy him;
 "that is to say, he was constrained to give a law
 "in mount Sinai, with so great majesty, and with
 "so terrible a shew, that the whole multitude was
 "astonished. *Exod. xix. 20.* This, as it is the
 "proper and the principal use of the law, so is it
 "very profitable and also most necessary. For if
 "any be not a murderer, and adulterer, a thief,
 "and outwardly refrain from sin, as the Pharisee
 did

" did which is mentioned in the gospel, he would
 " swear (because he is possessed with the devil)
 " that he is righteous, and therefore he conceiv-
 " eth an opinion of righteousness, and presumeth
 " of his good works and merits. Such a one God
 " cannot otherwise mollify and humble, that he
 " may acknowledge his misery and damnation, but
 " by the law. For that is the hammer of death,
 " the thundring of hell, and lightning of God's
 " wrath that beateth to powder the obstinate and
 " senseless hypocrites. Wherefore this is the
 " proper and true use of the law, by lightning,
 " by tempest, and by the sound of the trumpet (as
 " in mount Sinai) to terrify, and by thundring to
 " beat down and rend in pieces that beast which is
 " called the opinion of righteousness. Therefore
 " saith God by Jeremy his prophet, my word is a
 " hammer breaking rocks. For as long as the
 " opinion of righteousness abideth in man, so long
 " there abideth also in him incomprehensible pride,
 " presumption, security, hatred of God, contempt
 " of his grace and mercy, ignorance of the pro-
 " mises and of Christ. The preaching of free re-
 " mission of sins through Christ cannot enter into
 " the heart of such a one, neither can he taste or
 " savour thereof. For that mighty rock and ada-
 " mant wall, to wit, the opinion of righteousness,
 " wherewith the heart is environed doth resist it.
 As it remains no longer dubious, that the moral
 law

law in the hand of the divine Spirit is in no wise ordained to effect any true hope in the consciences of his people before faith, but rather to condemn; let us therefore lastly consider what was before proposed, viz.

The manner in which condemnation in the conscience is effected; this is calculated to render sin bitter, and to cause the people of God, before they are brought savingly to him, to stand in awe of sinning. Let it be premised, that the Lord is not confined to time. Many instances there are, whereby the almighty sovereign manifests the exceeding riches of his grace, both in the conviction and conversion of the stout hearted, even in a very short space of time; perhaps under one discourse such persons may clearly discover their condemned state, their weakness and helplessness; be favored with so perspicuous a display of the way of salvation by Christ Jesus, and so influenced by a divine energy, that no question may be justly made either by themselves or others, but that they are become the trophies of the Lord's special grace.— However as the present matter of inquiry respects those on whom he more gradually operates as a spirit of bondage; may we not affirm that the Lord thereby would teach the soul (who is the subject of such operations) the great evil of iniquity, if not in an especial and peculiar light respecting God, yet as relating to itself, and the danger

danger and bitter effects of transgression, thereby leading the mind to fear and stand in awe of persisting still in a course of rebellion. This certainly may be the case of those who are not yet the subjects of faith, and who may not be justly denominated the called of God. In order to prosecute this subject, 'tis necessary to observe, that every rational creature is either actuated by a supreme love to God, and acts in conformity to that principle, or by a supreme love to himself: that any man void of faith in Christ, a stranger to a saving acquaintance with redemption through the mediator, in any degree hates iniquity, and loves the commands of God from a supreme love to him, will be too difficult to prove, either from experience or the word of truth. 'Tis true, many of the heathen poets, philosophers and great men amongst them, inculcated the love of virtue, purely for its amiableness and beauty, also the abhorrence of vice, on account of its intrinsic turpitude and vileness; yet if any among them can be found who practised the one and were not guilty of the other, excited to such a conduct from the above motives without a supreme regard to self interest or self preservation; may it not be confidently affirmed notwithstanding, that a supreme love to the will of God they knew not, either in theory or practice? If then every man hath con-created with him a desire of self preservation and

self advantage, the misery of man fallen and degenerated is, that this principle hath usurped the throne of God in the soul, and will be obeyed by all the faculties, and powers of the man in all things, in preference to God. Hence we see the rise of all legal workings of the heart. Doth the Lord the Spirit convince of notorious scandalous iniquities, of a flagrant and horrid conduct, and condemn the man in his conscience on this account, present to his view the threatenings of the Lord against him, and shew the soul the danger it is in of everlasting misery? Self love at once begins to stir within it. True, says the man, I must be in danger indeed! Such as I am I cannot have any hope of pardon! And what will it profit me in the end if I persevere in those ways? Certain it is I must perish everlastingly; would it not be better for me to break off these ill courses, repent, and be a new man? Certainly it would; besides I shall then be delivered from that inward sense of divine displeasure which I now feel, and can I doubt but then the Lord will have mercy upon me? What is all this but the product of self love, an inclination to reform through fear and dread? Not any regard to God's glory, concern how he hath been dishonored, much less from any supreme love to him. Now the man sets about the work, not from any hope the divine spirit effects within him: no, but from an imaginary and delusive persuasion,

persuasion, excited, and stirred up by self love; viz. that a reformation from gross practices will save him. For though this divine agent through the law testifies what the man hath to fear, and thereby renders his sins burdensome, painful and tormenting; yet it is the man's ignorance and pride which are the springs of his false confidence in his reformation from the enormities he before lived in. This hope is maintained according as he perseveres in his resolution of amendment; but if he relapse, if he break out again into his former excesses, then hath he fresh trouble in his soul; the law comes upon him with renewed denunciations, and until he can repent, amend, and conduct himself as a reformed person, he hath no quiet, he is miserable, and wretched in every thing he is engaged in; hence he is led to hate his iniquities, to look upon transgression as a great evil, to fly from them, but ah! not because they are injurious to the Lord's glory, contrary to his nature, subversive of his authority; but because of the affliction he feels in his mind in consequence of them, and inasmuch as he cannot think he shall escape everlasting wrath, unless he can conquer and subdue them. Thus the man may go on for some time sinning and repenting, until the Lord the Spirit shew him the necessity of heart religion, by revealing to him the perfections and attributes of God, that he is an holy, just, and righteous

God, that he searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men, and that he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, *Jer. xvii. 10. Eccl. xii. 14.* At this the man is amazed, his hopes are all fled, yet, reflecting there is a Savior provided, he begins to think that if he endeavors to watch not only his ways but his thoughts and purposes he shall do well. Who cannot see that the conviction is from the Spirit of truth witnessing to his own law, to the injunctions and threatnings thereof, shewing the man his danger and the jeopardy he is in? But whence arise his fears? From what quarter comes his hope? Not from the Lord, no; but still from the aforementioned principle, even self-love; he is mightily concerned for self, (which would be a commendable disposition, did it lead him to seek such a refuge, which should prove not only safe for him, but honorable to the Lord) and knowing no other way, than his own personal obedience, still his expectation is from thence, and when he finds that he is deficient, either in thought or deed, much more when he positively transgresses, either in the one or the other, his conscience is afresh wounded, his trouble again renewed, and his hope and expectations fail, and from hence arises his hatred unto his iniquities, both internal and external. All this he doth not without any respect

speet to Christ, no; but as something, if not to
 render him worthy of, yet to make him meet for
 Christ, and thinks there can or ought to be no
 faith in a Savior, unless he arrive at these prere-
 quisites. How far short of this, the expectations
 of many are, let their consciences testify. In this
 way a man from a prophane, unjust, and irrel-
 gious person, may become not only a moral, de-
 cent and sober, but in the judgment of most a truly
 sincere and religious man, though still under the
 law, and may appear both to himself and others
 to hate sin in heart and life, and yet do so only
 from a principle of self love, and not at all out of
 regard to the glory of God, and from a true love
 to or fear of him. But it may be demanded if a
 a man, notwithstanding sin is rendered bitter unto
 him and he stands in fear of offending, still remains
 in the same state, is not in the favor of and doth
 not love God, why should this work be carried on
 upon him in this way? Would it not have been
 better had it been instantaneous? In reply, it
 may be observed, the Lord knows what is best :
 he is a sovereign agent, and who shall say unto
 him what doest thou? Though this be a sufficient
 answer, yet some reasons may be advanced.

First, where convictions are gradual, the heart
 is better acquainted with its iniquities.

The man who hath been first convicted of his
 practical offences, hath by his contendings with
 his

his sins and corruptions been brought to a circumstantial knowledge and fear of them; and if from the evil of his thoughts his strife has not been external only, surely whatever his motive was, he cannot forget the pain and trouble his iniquities gave him; the remembrance of which when the Lord is pleased to bring him to a saving acquaintance with himself, and to a true and spiritual warfare with the corruptions of his heart, and the temptations of satan in his low seasons, and when grace is at a low ebb in its operations, may restrain him through fear, which though not a virtue, yet may be over-ruled so as to keep him from much matter of sorrow and disquietude, he cannot forget the wormwood and the gall, and as he hath heretofore smarted on account of sin, he is not so easily led unto the sins, for which he hath undergone so much sorrow.

Secondly, As he hath formerly when under a legal work only, (for we are now considering him the subject of grace) seen so much evil in sin, by the pain and affliction it hath given him, and was then led to consider how injurious it was to him, is induced more readily thereby, under the influences of grace to reflect what dishonor to God attends transgression, and is also led more deeply and seriously to meditate on the evil of it, as displayed and manifested in the sufferings of a mediator. We cannot easily forget that which hath given us much bitter uneasiness, and though we
knew

~~knew not when under the affliction, how to im-~~
 prove or rightly to consider the cause thereof,
 yet we cannot easily forget the source itself from
 whence it arose, and are more prompt and ready
 to avoid the evil, than we should be if experience
 had not taught us what misery is its attendant.

Thirdly and lastly, The Lord the Spirit may
 be pleased hereby to inure the man to a more than
 ordinary attention to sin, the evil and consequence
 of its guilt and dominion, to the end that redemp-
 tion by Christ may appear more precious and glo-
 rious, that the divine favor and love may be more
 esteemed when revealed; and that all things of
 time and sense may be eclipsed by Christ, and the
 blessings appertaining unto him. For as at the
 hour of death to a saint sensible he is about to
 quit the body, the sweet and gracious manifesta-
 tions of divine favor appear with a tenfold lustre :
 so to a man shaken over the mouth of hell, re-
 demption brought home to the conscience, is
 received with more abundant joy, thankfulness
 and gratitude, than by him who might be truly
 convinced of his iniquity, yet never the subject of
 such terrors. Wherefore to conclude, let it be
 well remembered, that the keenest apprehensions
 of misery infer not a state of freedom, but the
 weakest application to the provision God himself
 hath made, and in the manner he hath prescribed,
 is matter of the greatest joy, whether the subject
 of such grace can himself perceive it or not.

THE

THE NATURE, PUBLICATION, AND INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE MINISTERIAL OR GOSPEL CALL, AS SUBSERVIENT TO THE OPERATIONS OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT TO THE EFFECTUAL CALLING OF SINNERS TO THE GRACE OF GOD.

CHAP. I.

The Meaning of the Word Gospel, the Blessings thereof, and for whom provided, so as they shall infallibly partake thereof.

AS the use and office of the moral law, in the hand of the divine Spirit, in order to the effectual calling of sinners hath been considered in the former part of this inquiry, what remains to be weighed is the nature, publication, and instrumentality of the ministerial or gospel call, in sub-serviency to the operations of the same divine agent, to the aforementioned glorious and invaluable purpose.

Though there be no subject of greater importance to, or more demands the attention, study, and serious enquiry of mankind in general, than that which is to be the subject of our present search, viz. the gospel call; notwithstanding which there is none more treated with indifferency, neglect, contempt, and even with the most furious opposition

opposition by those very persons, who are invited thereby to partake of its blessings; were these blessings of a common nature we could not look on such conduct in rational creatures, but with amazement; but when we are informed the gospel is that which God has provided, and that it is his invitation, calculated to deliver from everlasting and inexpressible misery, and to inflate into eternal and inconceivable felicity, astonishment must seize us at the madness and extreme folly the children of men discover. From what principle this behaviour originates may be investigated in the following pages; yet we have all reason to lament a too great proneness to a disposition so unwarrantable, dangerous and God provoking. Like to this hath no subject been so violently opposed, neither hath there been any about which the professed ministers and dispensers thereof have been more divided; which thing hath laid a foundation for scepticism in the careless and indifferent, and for much fear, trouble, anxiety, and painful solicitude in the serious, awakened, and truly inquiring mind. There have been and still are some who understand by the word gospel, nothing more than the books of the New Testament in opposition to the Old, by which it must appear according to their exposition of the word, that all the worthies under that dispensation, either came short of eternal blessedness, or were saved

by the law. But let such consider the words of Paul. *Heb. iv. 2.* "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them: and though it is added, But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it, yet it profited others, who were not of them whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." Others there are who by the gospel tell you is intended salvation by Christ to every baptized person, whether infant or adult, from the guilt and pollution of Adam's transgression, and that such shall be saved, if they be obedient to the commands and injunctions of the New Testament: what is the language of such an assertion, but that every baptized person is only put into a capacity of saving himself, making the satisfaction of Christ in reference to their sins after baptism, either of no avail or else subordinate to their repentance and amendment? For but few will say they are perfect, yet many there are who conclude that their superior christian conduct and behavior to that of others, and their unfeigned repentance of sins committed, render them if not worthy of, yet at least meet for a title to the merits of the Son of God. To enumerate the various sentiments of the christian world concerning the gospel; to point out wherein they differ, and to animadvert thereon would be sufficient of itself to fill a volume. Wherefore leaving these things let it be observed as proposed, what the true meaning and

and signification of the word gospel, or what may be intended thereby. The learned tell us, that the word is of Saxon etymology, and signifies God's tidings, or good tidings, in Greek good news. Some observe on the Saxon language that in ancient time *spell* in that tongue signified speech, and therefore literally may be explained, a good speech. *Leigh* in his *Critica Sacra* takes notice that it is called in the Greek *Εὐαγγέλιον*, and in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament *נִבְאָה*: the former of the same import as if one should say a joyful message, a good message or news, glad tidings. The latter to the same effect, with this observation, that the word is derived from another which is translated *flesh*, alluding to the incarnation of the Son of God. Let the above suffice respecting the literal explanation of the word, and proceed we to the examination of the various senses thereof, as contained in holy scripture.

First, It may be observed, that it signifies glad tidings in general. *Isaiah lli. 7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good. Jer. xx. 15. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, a man child is born unto thee, making him very glad.*

Secondly, If we compare *Mark i. 1.* and

Luke ii. 5. with Acts i. 1. we shall find that the word gospel is used for the history of what Christ did and taught, and for which reason many limit the word to this meaning only.

Thirdly, Sometimes it intends the publishing of the doctrine of Christ. *1 Cor. iv. 15. For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 2 Cor. viii. 18. And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. Rom. i. 1. Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.*

Fourthly, By way of eminency it signifies the most joyful message of salvation, which we may perceive in *Luke ii. 10. And the angel said unto them, fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. Rom. x. 15. How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Wherefore let us inquire*

First, What are the good things contained in the gospel?

Secondly, By whom provided, and on whom they shall be infallibly and certainly bestowed.

First, What are the good things contained in the gospel?

gospel. In order to conceive aright both of the necessity and importance of this inquiry, it behoves us not to pass a false judgment upon ourselves, touching the state of our souls in God's sight, either in respect to the law or sin, that we suppose not ourselves guiltless when in reality guilty, or pure and holy either in nature or practice when both in the one and the other we are wholly contaminated and polluted; otherwise the inquiry will be unimportant and uninteresting as to us. However as the present scrutiny is made in the strictest connexion with, and the strongest reference unto, the observations made in the first part of this inquiry let us drop any further introduction, and enter immediately upon the examination of the subject.

The first and chief blessing contained in the gospel without doubt is a Savior. What a gift this is, far surpasses the most elevated conception of the tallest archangel; certain it is that the subject is degraded by investigation, and ought rather to be silently and thankfully admired than pried into, even with the least desire to be comprehended; for should we do so the reproof Zophar gave to holy Job would most fitly suit us. *Job xi. 7. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?* Paul was so far from any such pretension that he cries out
2 Cor.

1 Cor. xvi. 18. *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!* Which exclamation we shall cause to wonder at, when we hear him say in another place, *Acts xxi. 28.* Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood: therefore this gift is nothing less than infinite, consequently the greatest and most precious gift God could bestow upon the children of men, for what can he bestow preferable to himself? But the Arian will say, this is blasphemy, these expressions are unwarrantable, Jesus Christ though he created all things, yet he received the power whereby he did so from the divine Father; wherefore to attribute the same dignity, honor, and excellency to him, whose power is only derivative and finite, as to the divine Father, who is alone the infinite, self-existent and independent Jehovah, is to be guilty of a capital offence and transgression. To such a caviller it may be replied, art thou afraid to ascribe to the Savior the honor he demands? Nay, that which he hath signified to be the Father's good pleasure should be ascribed to him? Hear what is said, *John v. 23.* *That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.* If the honor is to be the same certainly though there is a distinction in the personality of the Father and the Son, the divine essence

is one and not divided: this elucidates that portion of sacred scripture, *Titus ii. 14. Who gave himself for us.* Though the Lord Jesus Christ is elsewhere said to be the Father's gift, yet the declaration now cited is strictly true, seeing the above doctrine is fully confirmed by what himself declares, viz. that he and his Father are one, *John x. 30.* and at the same time proves that although he was the gift of the divine Father, yet unless he had given himself, we never could have been partakers of so invaluable a donation. Here let us pause. Have we ever yet attended to this great transaction? Did we ever seriously consider the misery of a state of sin and guilt? What are our thoughts of the breach of the first covenant? Do we esteem that a trifling occurrence, a matter in which we are in no wise concerned, at least that it is a dubious point whether it relate to us or not? Or do we behold it as an offence, wherein every individual son, and daughter of Adam are involved? Do we judge ourselves to have sinned that sin in him, and so to have become guilty with him, in whom we all were represented, and did feminally exist? Do we weigh well the atrocity thereof? That it was committed against an infinite being, and consequently infinite in malignity? Do we ponder the unhappy consequence of that offence, viz. a rejection from God; and the loss of his image on the soul as the immediate fruit of that

that rejection? Have we meditated seriously that from so great a loss immediately sprung innumerable sinful thoughts, words, and actions; that the inward and outward man through the fall became both radically and practically, not partially but totally and continually defiled and polluted; and that the least of these innumerable transgressions springing from this defiled nature deserves eternal death? Have we duly reflected on the miseries and afflictions of this life, their diversity, pungency and with respect to many of them how excruciating and tormenting! And have we concluded them to be a part and prelude only of the curse due to our iniquities? If we had we should not lightly esteem the gift before described, but on the contrary view ourselves in the most dangerous and miserable condition without this Savior, without the knowledge of him as ours; and should comparatively disregard all the things of time and sense, for an acquisition so suitable, important, and interesting. But a question may arise how was this unutterable blessing bestowed, and to what end?—

The reply is

First, He was given in covenant.

Secondly, In promise.

Thirdly, In types.

Fourthly, In the flesh.

First,

First, He was given in covenant. This is apparent from the eighth chapter of the Proverbs particularly from the 22d to the 33d verse, where Christ speaketh of himself under the character of wisdom, declaring "he was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was;" and concluding with respect to himself so characterised, "rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." For wisdom here cannot be considered as an essential property of the divine nature, by the candid and judicious reader, who will afford himself time to reflect on, and weigh with care the connection of the whole passage, which if granted such a person must allow, that the Lord Jesus Christ was given in covenant from eternity. To this we will adduce the declaration of Paul, *Ephes. i. 4.*—According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.—Which certainly establishes not only the everlasting choice of the Lord's people, but the eternal gift of Christ also, inasmuch as all the saints were not chosen apart from but in him, before the foundation of the world. Zechariah (chap. vi. 13.) says, *the counsel of peace shall be between them both*, which cannot be supposed to commence at the incarnation of the Messiah, for to imagine any thing new with the Lord is to think unworthily of him.

For if David could say, *Psalms* lxxiv. 20. long before the prophecy of Zechariah, *Have respect to the covenant*, the counsel mentioned by the latter, must be dated before his time, and if so, why not from everlasting?

Secondly, The Lord of life and glory was given in promise. This is manifest as early as the fall of our first parents, *Gen.* iii. 15. Evidenced by the translation of Enoch. Confirmed by the preservation of Noah. Repeated to Abraham, *Gen.* xv. 17, 18, to Isaac, chap. xxvi. 4. and to Jacob, as appears by various passages of his life. Whether this were the case with the saints under the Mosaic economy, he who doubts thereof must be totally blind, if he reads the *Psalms* and *Prophets* and doth not perceive it, as in *Psalms* xxvi. 16. *Isai.* liii. *Dan.* ix. 24. and following verses, and innumerable places of holy Scripture.

Thirdly, He was given in types. No one can question this who reflects that the whole ceremonial law was but figurative. If so certainly an adumbration of the incarnation, obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Messiah, inclusive of blessings both spiritual and eternal resulting therefrom. These things the saints under that dark dispensation perceived by faith, and centered not in the rites themselves as the matter of their salvation, but pervaded with the eye of their mind.

mind these vails and coverings; and trusted and rejoiced in the glorious things they prefigured and held forth, which is strikingly obvious through the whole epistle to the *Hebrews*, and particularly affirmed in the 13th verse of the 11th chap.—“ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Fourthly, He was given in the flesh. This needs no proof to them who believe the New Testament writings to be of divine authority, the whole tenor thereof fully proving this grand and important matter; but for a more particular proof we need only refer to *John* i. as also 1 *John* i. wherein we have all the evidence we can desire. In this great and amazing act, together with what the Messiah did and suffered, are fulfilled all the promises, Jewish types, and ceremonies which related to him. Surely this is the noblest and most blessed æra that ever commenced among the children of men! What doth it record less than a visit from the Almighty, his personal presence with and his dwelling among us, sufficient to astonish and strike with the deepest admiration those intellectual spirits, the inhabitants of the celestial world, who never transgressed the commands of their omnipotent sovereign! Deeply convinced of the infinite condescension of the

eternal Jehovah, in taking notice of what they perform in heaven, how must they have been amazed at this divine procedure, in tabernacled with the sons of men, not possessed of their original rectitude in which they were created, but defiled and polluted! Surely divine mercy, love, pity, and compassion were the grand cause of this wonderful appearance! We were become the awful captives of law and justice, under sin and Satan. The Lord well knew that none in heaven or earth, but himself, could redeem us from our thralldom and bondage, and that we must for ever be held in chains of divine vengeance, unless he engaged in this gracious and merciful undertaking. What then is our inquiry? Shall we ask further how was Christ given? 'Tis answered into the hands of law and justice for us and in our stead.— Were we become the subjects of a polluted nature? Christ takes upon him our nature, and is born for us immaculate and spotless; yea beyond the common course by which the children of men derive their existence, *Luke i. 35. Rom. viii. 23.* Are we in our present state incapable of that obedience the law requires? Christ engaged to fulfil all righteousness for us, *Psalms xl. 7, 8.* Are we fallen under the infinite displeasure of him that created us, have we run in debt to divine justice ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay? What love! What mercy and compassion doth our Lord express!—

Luke

Luke xii. 50. I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished! And that it was accomplished, his resurrection and ascension into the holiest of all for us abundantly prove; for us who never should have been able to have delivered ourselves from hell and the grave, but have remained the awful captives thereof to eternity! Nay, the resurrection of Christ ensures a greater deliverance, viz. a spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin to newness of life here, the sure prelude to an entire deliverance hereafter, not only from hell and the grave, but from the very existence of sin itself, that evil which is the cause of all misery. If Christ be so great a gift as before described, yea infinitely transcending all description, the gospel then must contain innumerable divine gifts in consequence of the gift of him, viz. the gift of pardon, *Ephes. i. 7.* Complete righteousness, *2 Cor. v. 21.* Peace with and from God, *Micah v. 5. Rom. v. 1. and xv. 13.* Of joy, *Rom. v. 11. xiv. 17.* Victory over sin, *Rom. vii. 25.* Satan, *Rom. xvi. 20.* Nay, the gift of all spiritual blessings, *Ephes. i. 3.* And not only of salvation in life, but also in death; not in time only, but also in eternity, *Phillip. iv. 19. Heb. xiii. 5. John xvii. 20, 24. Hosea xiii. 14.* And in fine the gift of God himself, viz. the divine Father to be our Father, *Gal. iii. 26.* And the Holy Spirit for every blessed end, both in time

time and eternity, *Gal. iii. 14. John iv. 14.* Seeing so rich is the treasure of the gospel, and such the blessings thereof, we come next to inquire, by whom such inestimable benefits are provided. If we attend to our Lord's word, *John iii. 16. 17.* and to the declaration of the apostle Paul, in the 8th chapter and 32d verse of his epistle to the *Romans*, we shall soon be informed of this matter. For he who is truth itself acquaints Nicodemus in the aforesaid passage, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life." And the apostle in the chapter and verse abovementioned asks such a question, which no one will deny to be tantamount thereto, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—From which testimonies springs the most perspicuous evidence, that the author of so invaluable a treasure is the divine Father. Here be we careful to entertain no absurd and dishonourable thoughts of God. We are not to imagine a plurality of Gods, neither in maintaining the unity of the divine essence are we to deny a trinity of persons or subsistencies, but rather be firmly persuaded that they are co-equal and co-eternal. Doth not our Lord declare his equality by saying to the Jews, *John v. 17. My Father worketh hitherto,*
and

and I work? And what is the due of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul hath shewn, *1 Cor. ii. 10.* But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Therefore the salvation of mankind is equally to be attributed to each of the divine persons in the trinity, seeing the essence is undivided; yet without all doubt in the economy of redemption, the holy scriptures ascribe to each a part respectively, as most proper and peculiar. We find in the word of God, the divine Father is said to bestow the blessings of the covenant, the divine Son as mediator betwixt God and us to have received them, *Ephes. i. 3.* and the Holy Spirit to be that almighty agent who makes his people partakers thereof. Wherefore without danger of temerity we may again affirm, that the divine Father is the fountain of grace, so rich and wonderful as hath been before noticed. For it was from his love that his people were chosen, *Ephes. i. 4. Rom. ix. 13.* Correspondent herewith we hear the Lord himself declare to his ancient church, *Jer. xxxi. 3.* Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. After such unerring and incontrovertible witness and testimony, occasion is no longer left us to doubt and hesitate, but we are rather called upon to admire and adore that all gracious source and spring of blessings, so great, glorious and beneficial.—

But it may be asked, For

For whom are all these blessings provided?
On whom shall they be infallibly and certainly be-
stowed? This question may be answered, viz.

First, negatively.

Secondly, Affirmatively.

First, Not on every individual of the sons and daughters of Adam. If this assertion be untrue how comes it to pass that any are lost? What the grace is hath been before observed, and that any should perish, who are made partakers inchoatively thereof, is a supposition most futile and weak, because the grace in their head Christ is answerable to all the circumstances, needs, and necessities that fallen man can be in. Was one man in a better state, by nature than another, better qualified to please, or more capable to yield acceptable service to his maker, the enemies of the truth might have some pretext and colour, to conclude that the Lord in his eternal purposes was governed by his foresight of what the children of men would be, according to the respective operations of their own free-will; but since an inspired apostle hath renounced all such pretensions, *Rom. iii. 9.* that alone cuts the sinews of every such conclusion, and makes it evident that such doctrine is vain and delusory. Therefore without the special grace of God bestowed, eter-

nal

nal blessedness cannot be enjoyed by any : wherefore it will not be enjoyed by those who always continue in a natural state, and ever remain destitute of regenerating mercy, whatever their supposed natural endowments may be ; and on the contrary it is no ambiguous assertion, that whoever at any time in this world are so favored, are certainly chosen to, and will infallibly enjoy the Beatific vision of God to eternity. If this be a true position, and if God himself hath declared in various and innumerable passages of his word, that many, yea very many will fall under his everlasting displeasure, then we may infer that the gospel treasure is not ordained, designed, or appointed to be bestowed on every individual of mankind.

Secondly, It is not intended to be bestowed on every one who hears the gospel promulgated and declared. Our Lord speaks of many called but few chosen. *Matt. xx. 16.* Not that we are to understand hereby that the Lord rejects any who come unto him, or that all are not invited, who sit under the sound of that call, for he hath declared the contrary by the commission given to his disciples, *Mark xvi. 15, 16.* " And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believ-

eth not shall be damned." From whence it is manifest, that many hear the gospel but believe it not. Some believe not the message to be divine, but reject and despise it; and others who entertain a favorable opinion thereof, yet are not so enlightened into a perception and discovery of its glories and excellencies as to attract them to a saving confidence in the mediator therein provided, and in the veracity of a promising God thro' him: the reason of which you have *Ephes. ii. 8. For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.* If faith be the gift of God, and he is not pleased to afford it to some, they who are denied this blessing, to them the gospel (though they hear it and sit under it) will become unprofitable and vain, and prove instead of a favour of life unto life, a favour of death unto death.— The Lord preserve us from so awful a circumstance, and excite us to the greatest diligence and attention, that we receive not the grace of God (or the gospel) in vain! *2 Cor. vi. 1.*

Thirdly, Not every convinced sinner shall certainly and infallibly be the subject of the blessings before described.

Here we may distinguish between the conviction of the law, and that which arises from the gospel.

First, In reference to the latter. As the dispensation

penfation thereof is a difpenfation of truth, it may and certainly doth become an instrument of conviction in the hearts of men, by the eternal Spirit : but as this point more particularly relates to the main and chief fubject of the prefent inquiry, it will be expedient to defer at prefent any further enlargement thereon. Therefore

Secondly, Not every finner convinced by the law is made a partaker of gospel blessings : this will be manifefl on reference to the fabled pages. Cain could fay *Gen. iv. 13.* " Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven ; " rendered by our tranflators ; " My punifhment is greater than I can bear. " It appears from hence he was convinced, but if we confult the 11th verfe of *Jude*, we fhall find he knew nothing by experience of gospel grace, " Wo unto them for they have gone in the way of Cain. " Balaam is another ftriking inftance of conviction, not only from the law, but alfo of the excellencies of the gospel, and yet the aforecited verfe from *Jude* fhews plainly he knew not the grace of God in truth. Ahab could humble himfelf and yet remain a wicked man ftill ; and Judas could repent, but not with that repentance that needed not to be repented of. But it may be objected, that though every one convinced by the law be not favored with gospel grace, yet they who are deeply fo

convinced must necessarily be the subjects of that grace. The reply is

First, That no legal conviction can entitle to gospel blessings. This appears from Gal. iii. 10. *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.* If a knowledge of our being under the curse will entitle to so great a benefit, how comes it to pass that men are so apt to despair when this knowledge is increased within them? No man is comforted from conviction, unless he conceive his perception of himself, and the disposition wrought within him denotes repentance, arising from some degree of special grace as its principle. On the contrary the stronger he concludes he is under the condemnation of the law, and the curse of God, and possesses no hope from any other quarter, the more his heart will rage against the Lord, and the farther he will fly from him. The hope handled in the first part of this tract, was made appear to spring not from the fulness of legal conviction, but from the reformation, labors, and endeavors of the sinner to fulfil the law's requirements, conceiving that if he did his best, the Lord would accept of him for Christ's sake. But experience teaches that when a man is condemned after the utmost assiduity and pains taken, he can conceive but little hope from a sense of his misery only. Therefore as the sinner apprehends no expectation

position to be derived from a consciousness that he is in a condemned state; if he is led to plead the mercy of God in Christ, it is wholly to be attributed to the secret workings of the divine Spirit as a spirit of adoption through the gospel. It is observed by some, that the Lord never wounds, but with an intent to heal; never deeply convinces the conscience of sin by the law, but he bestows gospel grace; and through a peculiar attachment to this principle they are apt to conclude, that to be convicted is to be in a state of grace, alledging the following scriptures: *Deut. xxxii. 39. I kill and I make alive. Hosea vi. 1. Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.* And other portions to this like purpose, which if properly considered will appear: either to relate to God's sovereignty, on respect his people who are already the subjects of faith lately planted, which in its operations may be very fitly compared to a grain of mustard seed; as also to such who have been the subjects of awful backslidings, and are now returning to their heavenly Father. Were it not so, what exposition could be given of many portions of sacred writ, would be difficult to say.— Paul tells us, *Rom. xiv. 23. Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.* And in *Heb. ix. 14.* declares, that the conscience is purged only by the blood of Christ, which blood can alone be applied by faith.

faith. The words of our Lord are on this point,
*John viii. 51. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man,
 and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* What else
 is to be understood here by eating and drinking,
 but believing. If these be the words of truth,
 how can conviction imply conversion? Or that
 conscience which is wounded only by legal terrors
 be denominated a pure conscience in any degree?
 Wherefore it would be most eligible for persons
 so circumstanced to fly unto the refuge set before
 them in the gospel, or examine whether the
 workings of the law are not opposed within them
 by evangelical operations, whether there be not
 some small degree of faith contending with much
 unbelief, some true love though mixed with much
 false affection, a grain of filial amidst a great mea-
 sure of slavish fear; and conclude of their state,
 rather from what they can find within them of the
 gospel, than of the law. Conclude we then, that
 though frequently God is pleased to use the law,
 to shew us our misery, in order that we may re-
 turn unto him by the gospel, yet the legal con-
 victions we may experience can give us no title
 to his favor, but only the free promise of God in
 his word. Would an offender against the civil
 law plead with his judge, that he expects pardon
 because he is convinced that he is guilty? This
 must be referred to the clemency of the judge, and
 must be expected in a way of mercy only. What
 faith

faith. *Luther* on this point: In his Exposition of the Galatians, *cap. 1. 10*, you have these words; "The law then must be laid upon those that are to be justified, that they may be shut up in the prison thereof until the righteousness of faith come: not that they attain this righteousness through the law (for that were not to use the law rightly, but to abuse it) but that when they are cast down and humbled by the law they should fly unto Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Secondly, That whilst a man is under legal convictions only, it remains a truth he is under the power of the law, and consequently in a state of spiritual death. Memorable is the observation of *Cameron* on this point: his words are in his Exposition of *Rom. viii. 15*, "Man by nature before he is illuminated by God, into the knowledge of the law, lieth asleep in his sin, and ignorant of his misery; a man even to the first moment of this illumination (as Paul testifies of himself, *Rom. vii. 9.*) esteems, or judges he lives, viz. he lives quietly, peaceably, and easy; but when his conscience is troubled by the law, he immediately dies, that is, he is wonderfully disquieted in mind and astonished. If this is not the case he may set about what is good

" good (which he never would have desired, un-
 " less the commandment had enjoined it): there-
 " fore his application is not cordial, out of love
 " thereto: or if he keep himself from evil (which
 " by nature is altogether pleasing to him) he un-
 " dertakes the same with difficulty and reluctance,
 " or else casting his eyes upon the curse with
 " which the Lord threatens the contumacious,
 " is persuaded he cannot escape, unless God in
 " some way which he is ignorant of should help
 " him, being incapable of reflecting on the curse
 " without distraction, fear, and horror. This
 " illumination is not from the quickness of the
 " understanding of the human mind, but is from
 " the Holy Spirit, which is here called a spirit of
 " bondage, because that man in which the Spirit
 " so works cannot but be a slave, through the
 " weakness of the flesh; indeed he is simply a
 " slave if he be the subject of legal light and
 " knowledge only. From hence appears, that
 " this great reformer was fully persuaded of what is
 " now laid down in our present proposition, and
 " well he might, since the Lord in his word hath
 " clearly and obviously revealed it. Who can at-
 " tentively consider the four first verses of Paul's
 " seventh chapter to the *Romans* and be ignorant
 " thereof? Doth not the apostle shew *Rom. iii. 19.*
 " that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to
 " those who are under it: to whom it is alive, who

have as yet no part in Christ, who are not quickened by the spirit of God to an evangelical and spiritual life? The divine Spirit has a right to use his own law on the consciences of men to manifest their guilt, and the punishment due to their offences, because he is that divine person against whom they have transgressed. But if he do no more, if he leave them under the condemnation of an enlightened conscience only, and shew them not the remedy God has provided in the gospel, can it be inferred because they are legally illuminated, therefore they are pardoned? Who can suppose there are any sleepy consciences in hell? At the judgment of the great day will not all be then so convinced of their sins, as in this state we cannot form an idea of? Yet no man in his senses will say that such will then because self-condemned become pardoned persons. If so, by what authority can any man deny the Lord the Spirit the liberty of fully convincing a sinner of his iniquities, and of the awful consequences thereof, without affording him the least gleam of hope, if he pleased so to do? Therefore in whom the divine Spirit only so acts, he is in them as the spirit of bondage, and not in the least measure as a spirit of adoption, *Rom. viii. 15*.

Secondly, In the affirmative. It may be inquired, on whom shall the blessings before spoken be infallibly bestowed?

M

To

To answer this important question, it will be necessary to forego the opinions and sentiments of our fellow men, unless deduced from the word of God, according to its true and proper meaning. Some will conclude on this matter abstracted from, and others in opposition to what the Lord himself declares, governing themselves according to the dictates of a corrupted mind, and unsanctified and polluted affections, determining on truth rather by what is most agreeable to their choice, than being solicitous to avoid error and self-deception. Therefore seeing the judgment of man, unassisted by divine revelation, or uninfluenced by the Spirit of truth, is insufficient to guide us herein, let us with prayer and supplication search that sure word of prophecy, which cannot deceive, *1 Pet. i. 19.* Attend we then to what the master himself declares. *John xvii. 2, 9, 10.* As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him, I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. From whence it appears that they who are in time to be subjects of gospel blessings, are the gift of the Father, and therefore predestinated from eternity to this glory and happiness. If not, what doth Paul intend by saying, *Rom. viii. 30.*

“ Moreover,

Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified. But, that we may not mistake his meanings, let us also consider and weigh well the following verses: "What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who shall be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, (viz. those whom he predestinated) how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Surely every unprejudiced inquirer must acknowledge, that the apostle intends hereby to inculcate the truth before asserted, viz. that as many of the sons and daughters of Adam, who were chosen by the divine Father from everlasting to salvation, shall infallibly be the subjects of the blessings of the gospel in time and to eternity, and that none but they shall be so favored. To judge otherwise is to deny either the freedom of God's grace, or his divine perfections. For if man through the fall be wholly dead, *Ephes. ii. 1, 5.* free grace can only profit us: assisting grace will be insufficient. But if the grace exercised on the children of men find us entirely undeserv-

ing of the favor of God, and incapable of the least spiritual thought much less action, how came it to pass that that grace should quicken any, who were not chosen from eternity to be the happy subjects of so rich a benefit? No one can answer this question without denying the Lord's eternity and immutability, which if they do they deny all his other perfections; consequently will countenance atheists, not only in practice but principle also. If then we are among the called, viz. this privilege be evident unto us, the testimony of this apostle, *1 Tim. i. 9* will be by us acknowledged to be certain and indubitable; viz. that God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began; and shall be ready to own with him respecting the ancient Israelites, *Rom. xiii. 11* that the election obtained this grace and that the rest were blinded. Thus have we investigated the etymology of the word gospel; its scriptural intendment; explored the great things it contains; and considered by and for whom they are provided: all which was necessary to prevent misapprehensions touching the ensuing subject, which we shall prosecute in the following chapter.

C H A P. II.

That the Call of the Gospel is properly denominated the Lord's Call, as he himself did promulgate it.

BEING now to make an entrance on the chief subject of the present inquiry, viz. the Gospel Call. Therefore

First, Let us attend to the nature of this call. Here we are to distinguish it from a call to a particular office either in church or state, and also from effectual calling, which is the end designed with reference to God's people, of which the call now to be considered is the mean. As the blessings provided (according to what hath been already observed) are so great, important and necessary, and without a participation of them, we are for ever miserable and wretched, no subject can be more interesting than that which is the instrument appointed by God for the enjoyment of grace so great, and benefits so innumerable and permanent, as those set before us in the treasure of the gospel. This divine treasure is spoken of by our Lord, *Luke xiv. 16.* under the similitude of a supper provided, and the call thereto

thereto is compared to the invitation given to partake thereof, verse 21. We may observe therefore, that our present question is, whether the same be properly denominated

First, God's call

Secondly, An universal.

Thirdly, A free.

Fourthly, An undeserved.

Fifthly, A merciful.

And sixthly and lastly, A most righteous call.

First, We are to inquire, whether it may be properly denominated God's call. That it deserves this epithet will appear from what is declared concerning it.

First, That the Lord himself did first promulge it.

Secondly, That he hath from the beginning raised up instruments for that purpose.

Thirdly, That he hath engaged still so to do, to qualify, and be with his ministers to the end of time.

First, The Lord himself did primarily publish it, therefore it may with propriety be said to be his call.

call. This appears from *Gen. lii. 15*, in the condemnation of the serpent, wherein he preached the gospel to our fallen parents, gave them to understand that he had purposed to make provision for the redemption both of them and their posterity, fallen in Adam their federal head and representative, and that though his arch enemy satan had gotten an awful advantage, yet the seed of the woman should spoil all his power, and prove victorious over him, and also effectually redeem both by price and power themselves who were then to expect, and such of their posterity as might in future look for redemption and deliverance in this way which he had now revealed. Certainly our first parents were better acquainted with the nature of this first promise than we are informed, for it is said in the 21st verse, that unto Adam also, and to his wife did the Lord make coats of skins and clothed them: from whence we may probably infer, that they sacrificed the creatures with whose skins they were cloathed, in faith on the promised seed; saw as in a figure the Messiah cut off for their iniquities, and that divine law which they had broken, by him in their behalf magnified and made honorable. Whether this were the case or not respecting the knowledge, and faith of our first parents in relation to the promised seed, yet we are sure it was so with Abel: for it is said touching him, *Gen. iv. 4, 5. And the*

Lord

Lord had respect to Abel, and his offering. But unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. The cause of which you have unfolded. *Heb. xi. 4.* wherein the inspired writer affirms, that *by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it, he being dead yet speaketh.* This divine testimony sufficiently elucidates the nature of the first promise, that it was not an object simply of reason, no revelation of election, but set forth and propounded to be believed, considered, and trusted in, which Abel through grace was enabled to do, but Cain not; and it further shews that Abel obtained witness, that he was righteous not before, but after he had offered the sacrifice. Again. The Lord himself did proclaim the gospel to Abraham, as is evident from *Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3.* compared with *Heb. xi. 8, 9, 10.*—“Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee; and I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” But what doth the author of the above epistle record concerning Abraham? He says, “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose

whose builder and maker is God." Wherein it is obvious, that by the Lord's command to Abraham, and the promise subsequent upon it, things far superior to those which are of a temporal nature are to be understood, for no one can doubt, who will refer to various parts of the New Testament relative to Abraham, but that he believed in the promised seed, which was to spring from his loins, and in consequence thereof obeyed God. Finally, the gospel call may be denominated the Lord's, because he himself in our nature did publish it. This is evident from *Luke* *iv.* 17, 18, 19. and from innumerable passages of the four Evangelists.

Secondly, That it is the Lord's call, is apparent from the instruments raised up, even from the beginning of time to declare it. For proof of which we may refer to *Gen.* *iv.* 26. "And to Seth, to him also there was born a Son, and he called his name Enos; then did men begin to call upon the name of the Lord." Which implies that they professed the truth of God, and separated themselves from the wicked. But that this was done without any ministry or public declaration of God's promise is no wise probable. Enoch is recorded *Gen.* *v.* 24. to have walked with God, and it is said of him, that he was not, for God took him: from whence it is obvious that he was a saint of peculiar eminence, and according to

Jude 14. 15. not a person of a private but public character, also without all doubt a preacher of the gospel. That Noah was such, we have the testimony of the apostle Peter, *1 Epist.* 2. 5. to prove it. Need we instance Abraham, when we are informed of what the Lord declares concerning him, *Gen.* xviii. 19. whose example we may not doubt but was copied both by Isaac and Jacob who lived after; and though we are ignorant to whom they made known the things, which relate to eternal salvation, beside those who were under their more immediate patronage, yet doubtless to the latter they neglected not instruction, especially in so momentous a concern, as the subject we are now treating. Leaving other instruments beside those already noticed, pass we on to Moses, who not only is stiled the lawgiver with respect to the moral, but the ceremonial law also, and therefore must necessarily be an eminent instrument to the above end. No one will question this who attends to the word of inspiration concerning it, *Heb.* x. 1. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, &c." is the testimony of the author of that epistle, which clearly evinces that the ceremonial law was Christ, his redemption, and all the blessings appertaining thereto, veiled under that shadowy dispensation. And what was the administration thereof, but the gospel more obscurely set forth? Which being by
the

the appointment of God uninterruptedly to be obeyed by the whole Jewish nation, even to the coming of the Messiah, there was a constant succession of various ecclesiastic officers, on whom it was incumbent to set forth the salvation of the Messiah, according to that typical appointment.—Certainly as it is now, so it was then in some degree touching the explanation of divine mysteries; and we have no more reason to question but schools and academies subsisted among the Jews from the earliest ages, for the education of youth for sacred offices, in order that the people might be instructed in matters concerning salvation, than we have that such have subsisted since the institution of Christianity. Some information hereof we have, *1 Sam. xix. 18. 2 Kings ii. 3. 5. 2 Kings iv. 23.* which is evidently corroborated by the practice of the Jews in the times of our Lord and his apostles, *Luke ii. 46. Acts xix. 9.* for it cannot be conjectured that such a practice was then but of modern date. Add to these the extraordinary instruments to the above purpose. What think we of a David, a Solomon, and others? The writings of the two latter evidently prove it. But when we come to peruse the prophecy of Isaiah, we are ready to say that to an uninformed reader with respect to the time in which he wrote, he must appear to have described the Messiah as come, rather than looked for and expected: a specimen

of his extraordinary peripicuity and minute description in relation to that glorious and divine personage you have in his fifty-third chapter.— Nor are Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the lesser prophets wanting in evident characteristics of so honorable an office: (viz. the publication of the gospel,) which must be plain and obvious to every one solicitous of information. Nay, Daniel in his 9th chapter so describes the time, obedience and sufferings of the Son of God, that it amounts to one of the strongest and most irrefragable arguments in the mouth of a christian against a Jew that can be brought. It would be needless to proceed any further on this head, as every one is informed who can read his Bible, by whom and to what purpose the apostles of our Lord were called and sent forth. Therefore let it be observed as proposed, viz.

Thirdly, That the Lord hath engaged to raise up, qualify, and be with his ministers to the end of time. Had not the Lord so engaged, it would be difficult to say how his kingdom in the world could be maintained. That it is an everlasting kingdom the scriptures are clear in; David speaking thereof under the splendor, majesty, and riches of Solomon as a type, says, *Psalms lxxii. 5, 6, 7.* “They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations:

he

he shall come down like rain upon the mowen
 grass, as showers that water the earth: in his
 days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance
 of peace so long as the moon endureth. Which
 we know neither was, nor could be literally true
 of Solomon, but must relate to the Messiah as
 Daniel testifies, chap. ii. 35. and which innumer-
 able scriptures in the Old and New Testament
 confirm. As then the kingdom of Christ shall
 continue even to the end of time, there is, and
 will be a necessity of officers and ministers therein
 until that period: this appears from his commis-
 sion to his apostles to preach the gospel, and dis-
 ciple the nations, *Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.* "Go ye
 therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in
 the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of
 the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all
 things whatsoever I have commanded you. And
 lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the
 world. Amen." For the promise here afforded
 cannot be restrained to the apostles to whom it
 was first given; seeing they have been long since
 dead, and the world still continues; neither has
 there been at any time since our Lord's ascension
 an entire cessation of rule and government in his
 kingdom: if there had his kingdom could not be
 said to endure. Therefore 'tis demonstratively
 evident that an uninterrupted succession of minis-
 ters and officers has continued in his church since
 that

that time, and without all contradiction will so continue until the final consummation of all things. As then, from what has been observed, it indubitably appears that the call of the gospel is the Lord's call, and that with the utmost propriety, it is to be attributed to him : how doth it behove every one of the human species, to whom it cometh to entertain and regard it as the voice of the Lord speaking to him or her in particular ?—The want of this attention in the sons and daughters of apostate man, is the melancholy and fatal cause of the everlasting and unutterable misery and wretchedness of thousands, yea millions of his unhappy posterity. Alas ! Sin hath so blinded our eyes, that we see not our misery. Melancholy is that disorder of body that renders its subject insensible of its danger ; but how much more so when the person, the subject thereof, becomes pleased and delighted in it, and is influenced thereby to consider himself in health and safety, when all around perceive he is on the verge of eternity. Is there no physician to be procured for such a one ? Undoubtedly there is. Are there no remedies to be applied to a person in these circumstances ? Who will answer in the negative ? Yet were you to consult the patient he would not listen, nay he would grow angry with and tell you, you were disturbers and troublers of his peace and felicity. Is not this the awful case

case and circumstance of mankind in general with
 respect to their souls & They are sick unto death;
 they are on the verge of an eternity, not of hap-
 piness, but of unpeakable torment, and yet they
 esteem themselves well; are at ease; think they
 stand in no need of the physician Christ, or of
 any spiritual remedy to be administered unto them.
 Some will say what hath the gospel to do with
 such? The Lord in his word speaks not unto,
 neither doth he call upon such to come unto him
 for salvation. Were they wounded, and brought
 to a deep sense of their practical offences, the
 malignity and turpitude of them; did they behold
 the evil of their hearts and natures; and were
 such persons become the subjects of the grace of
 repentance, we would acknowledge; say they,
 that the gospel did call them, but before this
 is their case they have nothing to do with Christ:
 they have no authority to come unto him, nay,
 it would be an increase of their condemnation so
 to do: for what else is such a conduct, but making
 Christ the minister of sin? In reply to persons of
 this stamp we answer, that the Lord sees not a
 natural man one time any more worthy of his
 grace than at another. Though the stony heart
 be broken into ten thousand pieces by the law,
 every part thereof retains its lapideous nature
 still; consequently whatever the conduct of such
 a person may be, whether licentious or moral,

yet

yet he is prompted not from love to God but from a regard to self, preferring this idol to the Lord even in the whole of his moral conduct, which is only a diversification of the agency of this unhappy principle, which immediately took place on our apostasy in Adam, viz. a setting up of it in the heart in the room of him who created us, and paying that homage to this idol, that is only due to our supreme Lord, sovereign, and benefactor. True it is that the difference is great between a licentious and moral conduct in the natural man. Many are the temporal benefits resulting from a religious and civil behavior, and it would be a matter for which we never could be sufficiently thankful, if the whole world of rational beings were so disposed. Nay, we may proceed further and affirm, that the unconverted moralist, who opposes not the truth of God, incurs not that degree of divine wrath, which the licentious person does; yet to say his estate is better, that he is one jot more in the favor of God than the latter, is certainly a mistake, and unquestionably contradicts the oracles of truth. Wherefore we conclude, that the use of the law in the hand of the divine Spirit, is not at present calculated to produce some good thing in the heart of a natural man, whereby or on account of which gospel grace may be bestowed, but rather that he may be so awakened to his misery and danger, as to see the necessity of attending

attending to God's call in the gospel, and the jeopardy he is in if he obey it not. Therefore, that which may be repentance in the natural heart springs from self love, and though it may answer many valuable purposes, yet the man, the subject of it remains wholly flesh, of the disposition whereof the apostle Paul hath informed us, *Rom. viii. 7. The carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

CHAP. III.

The Gospel Call is universal and unlimited.

HAVING shewn in the preceding chapter, that the word of salvation may be denominated God's call, as he himself hath published it, and hath, and doth continue to raise up instruments to that purpose, we are next to inquire whether it be an universal and unlimited call.— In reply hereto let it be observed, That

First, It is not limited in the scriptures of truth.

Secondly, All thereby are invited to the gospel feast.

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First,

First, The gospel call is not in sacred writ limited. Indeed it was so under the Mosaic or legal dispensation, but this limitation was rather accidental than that any were excluded, who were willing to embrace salvation in the way God then ordained. It hath been observed already that the gospel before the coming of Christ, was preached to the Jews in types and figures, which were adumbrations of that redemption, which the Son of God should effect in the fulness of time, in the behalf of his people ; and though this divine œconomy was confined to the Jewish nation, yet no stranger was prohibited from dwelling among or incorporating with them, as appears from *Exod. xii. 48*. Indeed there is a very great difference between that and the present dispensation, inasmuch as it is not only lawful but laudable to carry the gospel even into the most distant and savage nations ; but respecting the former, the means of salvation were confined to that single people, as the apostle Paul testifies, *Rom. xi. 4*.—*To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises.* Yet, as we have already noticed, strangers were not excluded from a participation of those invaluable privileges. If then the case thus stood under the Old, can any one suppose the New Testament dispensation is more contracted ? Let us hear the great apostle of the Gentiles on this point.—

1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.* If any one can find herein a limitation to the gospel call, he must have the eyes of an Argus ; for if it be worthy of all acceptance, doubtless it is deserving the acceptance of every sinner : and though many such may be too careless or too proud to accept it, yet it follows not but this and many other portions of God's word call upon them to that purpose.— What doth the same apostle say to the idolatrous Athenians ? Why he tells them, *Acts xii. 30. The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent,* (or change their minds, or to be wise again, as the original word signifies.) Compare this passage with *John xx. 31. But these things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.* Who can say after duly pondering these scriptures that any individual is unconcerned herein, to whom the letter of the word is revealed ; though one and another may say with the many who were bidden to the marriage, *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it, or I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused : yet can they affirm they were not bidden ?* If not, how then is the gospel call contracted ? On the contrary

Secondly, All thereby are invited to the gospel feast. This appears from *Luke* xiv. 21.—
 “ Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.”—
 What doth this intend but the dispersed Jews and Gentile profelytes, to whom the gospel message was sent, after the scribes and pharisees had rejected it? And as if this glorious invitation appeared not yet sufficiently extensive, it is added, verse the 23d, “ Go out into the high ways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” Obviously signifying, that it was the divine purpose, that the gospel should not be sent only to the Jews, *Acts* xiii. 26. but to the Gentiles also, verse 46—50. These passages last quoted, although they also prove the universality of this divine message, yet declare by the event that though many be thus called, yet few are chosen. Now to this doctrine very few will subscribe. Some will object, that it cannot be, seeing Christ himself invited not the self-righteous, but the weary and heavy laden only. *Matt.* xi. 28. Indeed by this scripture it doth not appear that he invited any other, nevertheless it cannot thence be inferred, that all others were forbidden. It appears from 1 *John* iii. 23. compared with chap. v. 13. that the command of God to

to his believing people is, that they should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another. Will any one say from thence, they who have not already believed, or manifested any love to the brethren, may do as they please : the preaching of the gospel is not obligatory on them, it relates not to such, neither is it possible for persons unconverted to embrace the divine witness? If observations of this kind be conclusive, what construction may we put on verses 11 and 12.—“ He that believeth not, God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Is the meaning hereof, he that hath already believed, yet doth not now believe hath made him a liar? But the expression is not doth, but hath made him a liar, and appears to respect not those who are in a state of faith, but them who are void of this grace ; besides the grace of God in the hearts of his people, prevented not by natural obstructions, never suspends its operations totally, but only may be as natural life in a man under a fit of apoplexy, in whom though there be no external, yet are there some internal indications thereof. If this therefore be not the meaning of this passage, may we suppose the intendment to be as follows? viz. he that believeth not that God hath given to his people

people eternal life, hath made him a liar. But how doth this exposition correspond with the 13th verse?—"These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."—May not the following questions be put to such who think it to be genuine? Was Balaam a good man, because he believed the children of Israel were God's chosen? Will the belief that the gift of eternal life was bestowed on the apostles and ancient saints, or that God's people at present are so favored, argue the person so believing to have the witness in himself? For so the context runs "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself;" and such as have the witness in themselves are believers, and are said in verse the 13th quoted above, to have eternal life. But if neither of the above constructions are, or can be the genuine interpretation of this part of sacred writ, may we conclude that the sixth verse is the key thereunto? The apostle in the verse preceding asks the following important question: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" That is, that hath so overcome the world, as neither by its frowns, or smiles, to be alienated, either in heart or life from God. Can any such be found but they who so cordially believe that Christ is the Messiah, as to believe on him for saving purposes?

poses ? Then he adds in the sixth verse, " This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." As much as if the apostle had said, this is the consecrated and appointed Savior of mankind, commissioned by his divine Father, as testified at his baptism, *Matt. iii. 16.* as also by water and blood coming forth from his pierced side at his crucifixion, denoting symbolically the purification he brought in, both from the defilement and guilt of sin, according to the types of the legal washings with water and blood; whose mediatorial character was afterwards attested by the Holy Spirit, both in his miraculous and saving operations: of similar purport are the two following verses, declaring the divine testimony both in heaven and on earth to the mission, authority and sufficiency of Christ as a mediator between an infinitely holy and righteous, but offended God, and guilty, sinful, and wretched men; declaring in the subsequent verses, that all or any who come to, and embrace the Savior by faith, in consequence of this divine testimony, they as the immediate fruits and effects of such a faith, possess through the operations of the Holy Spirit, the divine witness within them. But they that come not to Christ for salvation, and do not trust in him for that purpose, make God a liar,

either

either with respect to the divine testimony concerning the mission, authority, dignity, or sufficiency of Christ to save; or in relation to the sacred promises of acceptance through him. From all which it may irrefragably be deduced, that if they who hear the gospel, and come not unto Christ, reject the divine testimony, and are guilty of the sin of making God a liar, the imputation of this sin unto them for the above neglect, necessarily implies that the gospel call is unlimited, and excepts none who sit under its sound, whether they can believe it or not. To say that any among whom the gospel is preached are prohibited from embracing it, is not of the same import as to say they cannot. 'Tis one thing to aver that a man is forbidden to embrace the salvation set forth, and another to declare he will not accept it. Sure it is that the hardened sinner, the self-righteous pharisee will not come to Jesus; but doth it follow from thence that they are not invited, and that their guilt is not abundantly more aggravated by their refusal? To distinguish aright in this matter is of great importance to the awakened soul. Are not the impediments in the way of such built entirely on a supposition they are not invited? Could they repent; could they be truly sorry for their sins, and demonstrate it by their conduct, they then could believe the gospel message was to them. If such be told, that they
are

are not to be accepted for any work, either that they have done or may do, yet they will presently conclude that tidings so great and glorious as the gospel contains, are only sent to those who believe, but as for their part they cannot. If they were so happy as to be the subjects of this grace, they then might hesitate no longer, but embrace the gospel declaration without delay; but instead thereof they have no faith, and therefore cannot be the persons whom the Lord calls to partake of blessings so inestimable and precious. All this evidently manifests that it is natural to the human heart to seek for some worthiness or qualification, either from ourselves or the Lord, in order to embrace the message of his gospel; but if we be doctrinally persuaded, that the call thereof is not to all, immediately the heart is shut against it, concluding we are the persons who are excluded, therefore cannot embrace it as a free salvation judging we are not rightly circumstanced to accept it. Whether this be not of great moment who can doubt? Is it not so to the real christian, both in temptation and on a dying bed? Are such rare, that when in those circumstances their evidences will be clear? Suppose they are not, tell them then that the Lord's call is limited, what is the consequence? You stab them to the vitals, you cut off all hope, evidences they have none, and therefore they see no way for trust or expectation.

tion. But on the contrary, if the gospel call be universal, certainly it is free, or gracious. The freedom and universality of the gospel message must stand or fall together: if the latter be denied, the former is rejected. This assertion is just, as will appear from the following considerations.

First, That God's electing grace is not manifested to the objects thereof, before the gospel message be embraced.

Secondly, God's people are not of one particular character in their natural state; but as variously circumstanced, and as differently inclined as the non-elect.

Thirdly, That the law of God as much disapproves of them, previous to their effectual calling, as it doth of others.

Fourthly, Conscience properly enlightened hesitates not to reprove them, more than it doth the reprobate, who are the subjects of the like illumination.

And fifthly, That no man dare say, he is reprobated, who hath not committed the unpardonable sin.

First, That God's electing grace is not manifested to the objects thereof before the gospel message

message be embraced is obvious; because it is the only method God hath appointed to save sinners. Were not all the sons and daughters of Adam equally fallen in him their first head, one might have a better ground of hope than another; but if all bring the same corrupted nature into the world, and are equally involved in the guilt of his first transgression, by what argument can any of the human species prove that he hath an interest in the Lord's everlasting and electing love (considering himself only as one of the fallen offspring of a degenerate root) more than an inhabitant of the wilds of America, or a native of the Mogull empire. 'Tis true it may be known by effectual calling, *Rom. viii. 30.* Moreover, *whom he did predestinate, them he also called*: but who will assert, that this special calling cometh through the moral law? Doth not Paul, or rather the eternal Spirit of truth by him declare, *Rom. iii. 20.* by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God? But if they be of the law who are not justified, they certainly are not called, and consequently such cannot know they are elected; or have the least hope concerning it, but through another dispensation, to which they are yet strangers respecting any divine operation it hath had hitherto upon them. Therefore it will follow, that unless the grace, which cometh by the gospel, be communicated in a sovereign way and manner

without the gospel, the elect of God cannot know their election before they embrace its message; and to do so they certainly have no warrant, unless the Lord's call be to all that hear or read it. — That they cannot know their election before they embrace the gospel message appears from *Rom. x. 13, 14, &c.* "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Seeing then the gospel call must be believed and embraced, ere a man can possess the blessings it sets forth and displays, no one though elected can say he is warranted to believe it, unless he knows his election, or is persuaded this divine call extends to all who hear it. If he be not persuaded, either of his election, or of the universality of the gospel call, he supposes some legal righteousness whereby he differs from others (though not by nature, yet by practice) gives him such an authority, which supposition evidently contradicts the following passages, *Gal. v. 3, 4, 5. Rom. ix. 31.* which declare such a one cannot esteem the call here treated of to be free and gracious.

Secondly,

Secondly, God's chosen people are not in their natural state of one particular character, but are as variously circumstanced, and differently inclined as the non-elect.

If we consult scripture testimony we shall soon acknowledge this truth. Paul without the least doubt was a self-righteous person of the first rank, *Phil. iii. 4, 5*. The young man in the gospel appears to be of a similar stamp, yet have we no reason to believe he was called by grace, *Mark ix. 20.* to the 31st verse. Mary Magdalen a peculiar character of licentiousness and impurity chosen from everlasting as a vessel of mercy, *Mark xvi. 9. Luke vii. 47.* but we have no reason to conclude so concerning the daughter of Herodias *Matt. xiv.* and beginning. Zaccheus we are told by the Lord himself was a son of Abraham, and therefore salvation was come to his house, *Luke xix. 9.* but our Lord does not so affirm concerning all other publicans; and that he might for ever destroy, or at least silence the vain pretensions of the human heart, (to which it is natural to hope for salvation on the bottom of some legal righteousness, either internal or external) he without reserve assures the pharisees then present, *Matt. xxi. 31.* that publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before them. If therefore we suppose one natural man is more likely to be of the election

tion of grace than another, we certainly have no warrant to say it is the self-righteous; and if any will affirm it is the licentious, let such take heed lest they think lightly of sin, instead of esteeming it, as it really is, diametrically opposite to the infinite purity of an holy and just God. Hence then let such acknowledge their ignorance, and confess that his everlasting love is, and will be, ever a secret, even to the objects thereof, until the evidences of effectual calling declare it, *2 Pet.* i. 3, to verse 11. which is not manifested by the law, or any legal performances for the procurement of the divine favor; but by the power of the Spirit's grace through the revelation and promise of the gospel. For as the apostle speaks to the believing *Hebrews*, chap. xii. 18. to the 21st verse, "Ye are not come unto the mount, that might be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackness and darkness, and tempest and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words: but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, verse 24, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." So it may be said to every true christian at the present time. Now then neither self-righteousness nor licentiousness characterize God's elect before calling, nor do any
natural

natural dispositions, by which one differs from another : 'its not boldness, or timidity ; warmth or meekness ; wisdom ; or folly ; prudence ; or rashness, which flow from a natural constitution discover the great mystery. Doth not experience shew that some that are of those different tempers have been made partakers of Christ, and truly fear the Lord, whilst multitudes respectively peculiar for these several characters, are totally ignorant of the most interesting truths of the gospel, and apparently have not the fear of God before their eyes ? What boldness in a Luther ! Timidity in a Melancton ! Yet both appointed by God as chosen vessels of mercy, and likewise remarkable instruments to manifest the exceeding riches of his grace. And though these instances were in times past, yet as it was then without doubt it is still the same now. If then neither self-righteousness, libertinism, nor any natural temper can or ought to give any man the least hope respecting his salvation ; is it not manifest that the gospel call is to every one to whom it comes ? If not, no individual hath a right to accept it, and therefore instead of its being free, it will be quite the contrary.

Thirdly, The law of God disapproves as much of the elect themselves, previous to their effectual calling, as it doth of others.

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What one man will necessarily and unavoidably be with respect to heart and life, without the operations of the divine Spirit, through the law on his conscience, so will another. Whatever legal repentings may be effected in one, by the same divine agent there may be the same effect produced in another. Can the law know any difference, but according to the effects brought forth? True it is, it will approve or disapprove suitable to the harmony or dissonancy to or from itself of the acts produced; either in heart or life, be the agent who he may. This can only be said respecting acts materially considered, but the root from whence they more remotely, and the motives from which they more immediately spring, the divine law cannot justify either in whole or in part, so as to denominate the subject or his acts pleasing to God. For it requires first a full satisfaction for sin already committed; that original purity of nature which Adam before his fall possessed, and we in him, as the root of all our thoughts, affections, inclinations, words and actions: and therefore will not, nor cannot look with a favorable aspect, either upon us, or our actions, so as to give us the least expectation of the divine favor: it is not within its sphere, yet nevertheless if its Lord and sovereign be pleased to accept of a surety, who will fully satisfy for all the debts incurred unto, and amply fulfil all the requirements which
divine

divine justice demands, it will be contented; yet will not the law seek any such surety, keeping its eye constantly upon the sinner, the voice thereof is pay me what thou owest. Here we may take notice of a difficulty that arises, which is, if the Lord from eternity chose his people in Christ Jesus, and he in the eternal covenant became their surety, how can they in the divine sight be considered under the law in time, if his suretiship was accepted for them? In answer to which it may be observed, that they are openly and manifestatively under the law, sin, and guilt, and all the consequences of the breach of the first covenant in Adam. And though in the divine mind the threatnings and denunciations of the law are superseded, yet cannot his people be justified individually, until what is secret with the Lord is openly declared, which, were it possible to be prevented, the law would not be appeased, but with their everlasting destruction. The law of God cannot but justify the people of God collectively considered, seeing it has long been declared that for them Christ engaged, was given in promise, published in types, foretold of in prophecy, at length was incarnate, and finally was offered. Moreover as Truth itself has affirmed, that when the Lord died, rose, and ascended, his people died, rose, and ascended, the divine law can have nothing to say against them so considered, seeing

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what was foretold in prophecy has been fulfilled, *Isaiah xlii. 21. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, he will magnify the law, and make it honorable.* Yet whether there be any open declaration respecting each individual previous to that proclaimed in the court of conscience, is a point dubious and obscure: that there is not seems to be confirmed by *Luke xv. 7. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* Also by *1 Pet. i. 12.* "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." It appearing from these passages of divine truth, that what the angels are acquainted with relative to God's people in time, they learn from the things transacted on earth: therefore it is very probable, that the first declaration of God, that this, or that individual is just, through the merits of Christ, is made in the souls of his people by his Spirit. However that they were before this secretly the objects of his love, and that the Lord did regard them as those for whom the Lord Jesus was to satisfy, and in the fulness of time did indeed satisfy divine justice in the behalf of, cannot well be questioned: yet this will not authorize any one to say he was eternally justified, as the word justify signifies

signifies—a being declared just in open court.—According to this view of things, the law will not retract the least jot of its demands and requirements, until it receives a mandate from an higher court, and in what way this is received, if not by the gospel made effectual, by being brought home by the Spirit to the heart who can tell? Therefore the gospel call must be universal if it be free, seeing the law can afford no assistance either in a way of worthiness or meetness. But it may, notwithstanding all that hath been said, be demanded, what do the many portions of God's word concerning repentance intend, if there can be found no gracious act without the gospel? Or at least doth not the Lord require every one to repent, ere they be authorised to embrace Christ? In order to obviate this difficulty let us consider the several more important passages of God's word of this sort; previous to which it would be necessary to weigh

First, What repentance implies.

Secondly, What source we may suppose it arises from.

Thirdly, What kinds of repentance the word of God records.

First, What doth repentance imply?

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Certainly

Certainly it supposes the subject thereof either expects pardon for his past offences, or endeavors earnestly to avoid an increase of misery. That the law knows any thing of the former, is not difficult to determine. It is not an whole life of sorrow and amendment can atone for one single offence ; nay, could we, being entire strangers to the gospel, repent with all that purity of love to God, that the grace of the gospel produces, yet would it not make satisfaction for the least of our past transgressions : but when we consider, that this is impossible, and that all legal repentance can have no higher a motive than self love, how can compensation be made to justice for the least iniquity past, by that act which in its principle is a violation of the very essence of that law, to which we stand obliged ? Are we not enjoined to love the Lord above ourselves ? If so, no legal repentance can be satisfactory. That man as a rational creature, conscious of having run deeply in debt to divine justice, and convinced that the Lord will inflict on him the full demerit of his crimes and offences, may repent through fear all will allow : but surely such a one can with propriety only promise himself thereby an avoidance of accumulating that guilt, which would be the necessary consequence of an unbridled and unconstrained behaviour. But where is the man that can even command this ? For suppose him stripped

ped of all his self righteous pretensions to future salvation and blessedness, and fully persuaded that he is without all hope of eternal felicity, such is the corrupt disposition in the soul of every one, that he would lose all patience, and that enmity to God which before lay dormant would begin to stir and rage against him: therefore 'tis evident, some false hope must support the legal penitent, though it may be very dark and uncertain.

Secondly, What source may we suppose repentance arises from.

That true repentance, such as God regards, springs from his grace is indubitable, if we compare the 23d and 24th verses of the third chapter to the Romans together. Evident therefore is it that as grace is the source, the gospel by which this grace is conveyed must be the means. Nay, all repentance toward God springs either from a true and spiritual perception of the gospel, or from a false and delusive apprehension thereof; what arises from the former may justly be denominated a repentance, which needeth not to be repented of; and the fruit of the latter (though the gospel be the occasion thereof) cannot but be a legal repentance, and may be so called, inasmuch as it arises from an entertainment of the gospel, through the constraint of the law in the conscience, but not rightly received for want of spiritual light,
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the subject being still under the law, he cannot repent but as one in that condition, for as the state is so will the repentance be. Therefore in

The third place let us inquire, What kinds of repentance the word of God records.

To inform ourselves hereof, we need take but little trouble; because the apostle having in one portion of scripture made this grand distinction of repentance into true and false, viz. 2 Cor. vii. 10. thereby shewing that the former is from the grace of God in Christ apprehended by the power of the Spirit through the gospel; and that the latter, as it hath no such source, is insufficient to evidence the subject thereof to be in the divine favor; and also that it will not at last terminate in everlasting felicity, whatever may be the motives thereto, viz. the welfare of the person either in soul or body, here or hereafter. This being conclusive, we come therefore to what was proposed, viz.

To consider some more striking portions of God's word relative thereto.

The learned have made much noise concerning the original words expressive of repentance; and divide the same into *μετάνοια* and *μετάνοια*; the first answering to *נחם* in the Hebrew, and the latter

to שׁוּב which signifies he was converted, or rather to תְּשׁוּבָה translated *conversio*, *penitentia*, *reversio*, *responsio*, but as it plainly appears that the former is sometimes used with relation to an evangelical repentance, by the sacred penmen, it is unwarrantable to build any points of doctrine merely on the words; nevertheless, whoever will scrutinize into the original of the Old and New Testament, will find that the latter is almost used constantly to express a gracious and thorough change of the soul, and that the former is but rarely chosen for that purpose.

The word repentance is used with respect to the Lord's people in a state of grace, 2 *Cor.* vii. 9, 10. Also in relation to churches before approved of by Christ, though in some things reprehensible, *Rev.* ii. 5. iii. 3, 19. This affects not the matter in hand. In other places it is so used as apparently doth not imply the posteriority of faith, and consequently cannot be inferred to exist without the gospel, as *Mark* vi. 12. *Luke* xiii. 3. being excitements to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and the salvation he was to accomplish: this appears by comparing *Mark* i. 4. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." Also *Luke* iii. 3. *Acts* xiii. 24. with *Acts* xix. 4. "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying

saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." For it cannot be supposed that the nature of John's baptism was such as not to require faith, but rather such faith from whence true repentance immediately flows. According to most expositors *Mark* i. 15. repent, and believe the gospel, relates to the change of the dispensation : of this sentiment is *Grotius*, and many of his contemporaries. *Dr. Gysse* thus paraphrases :—" The Jewish rites are soon to cease, and a
 " spiritual and holy kingdom is to be set up : according therefore to the design, and by the grace
 " of this kingdom, which can never be moved, repent of your violations of God's law, and of all
 " false confidences in yourself, and embrace the
 " blessed doctrine of salvation, by believing in me
 " as made known therein, for the remission of your
 " sins and obtaining eternal life." *Dr. Gill's* exposition of this place is as follows :—" He called
 " them to repent, not only of their former sins,
 " but of their bad principles and tenets ; concerning a temporal kingdom of the Messiah, concerning merit, and free will, justification by
 " the works of the law, and salvation by their
 " obedience to the ceremonies of it, and the
 " traditions of their elders : these he exhorts
 " them to change their sentiments about, and to
 " relinquish them, and to give into the gospel
 " scheme, which proclaims liberty from the law,
 " peace,

“ peace, pardon, and righteousness by Christ,
 “ and salvation and eternal life by the free grace
 “ of God.” *Cameron* the great reformer in France
 taking the word repent in this passage to import a
 gracious disposition God-ward, the product of an
 unfeigned love, observes, that though in many
 places in sacred scripture it is put prior to faith,
 as if it were the source thereof, declares, that it
 amounts to no more, than if any one should ex-
 hort another to take care of his health, afterward
 subjoins, confide in, or believe the physician, in-
 tending that the way to recover health was first to
 apply to the doctor, his words are as follow.—

“ *Cum resipiscentia boni aliquid fidem precedere, adeoque*
 “ *cujus fides causa minime sit. Verum etsi priore loco*
 “ *resipiscentiam fide esse priorem: nam saepenumero fit*
 “ *ut inter loquendum finem modo finis proponamus, et*
 “ *consequens antecedenti; veluti si quis dicat, cura ut*
 “ *valeas; et crede Medico, cum tamen medico an te*
 “ *fidere oporteat, ut sanitatem et pristinam valetudinem*
 “ *recuperemus.*”

What hath been observed on the
 scripture last quoted, will serve as a comment on
 the passages following, viz. *Matt.* iii. 2. iv. 17.—
Acts xvii. 30. xxvi. 20. Nevertheless if it be still
 alledged, that repentance is by these portions of
 God’s word intended as a prerequisite to faith, and
 that the repentance therein spoken of, is the fruit
 and effect of special grace, though it hath not the
 gospel for its object, but the law, it is answered,

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it cannot be evinced to be of any avail, even to the subject possessing this grace, unless suitable fruits attend it, which if maintained, then is a man saved by the law, and not by the gospel, by works, and not by Christ. That the fruits are necessary to evidence its reality will appear from *Matt. iii. 8. Luke iii. 8. and Acts xxvi. 20.* Indeed our Lord says, *Matt. ix. 13.* "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" (similar thereto are *Mark ii. 17.* and *Luke v. 32.*) on which *Dr. Gill* judiciously remarks, that the occasion thereof is contained in the eleventh verse of the same chapter.—"And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, why eateth your master with publicans and sinners."—Verses 12th and 13th. "But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, they that be whole need not a physician but they that are sick, but go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call, &c." From whence it appears that the above scripture relates to the internal, as well as the external call of the gospel, seeing that he the divine publisher thereof had power both to preach, and render that preaching effectual. The Doctor's exposition is, viz.—"The persons called to this are not the
 " righteous; meaning either such who are really
 " so, because these are already called to it, though
 " whilst in a state of imperfection, daily need the
 " exercise

“ exercise of this grace ; or rather such who are
 “ so in their own opinion, and in the sight of men
 “ only, not in the sight of God, which was the
 “ case of the scribes and pharisees, and very few
 “ of these were called and brought to repent-
 “ ance ; but sinners, even the worst, and chief
 “ of sinners, who as they stand in need of this
 “ grace, and when thoroughly convinced, see
 “ they do ; so Christ came into this world as a
 “ prophet and minister of the word, to call them
 “ to it : which call of his does not suppose they
 “ had power to repent of themselves, for this man
 “ has not, he is naturally blind, and does not
 “ see sin ; his heart is hard, and obdurate, and
 “ till his eyes are opened, and his stony heart
 “ taken away by a superior power to his own,
 “ he will never repent ; though he may have
 “ space, yet if he has not grace given him, he
 “ will remain impenitent. No means will bring
 “ him to it of themselves ; neither the most severe
 “ judgments, nor the greatest kindnesses, nor
 “ the most powerful ministry ; repentance is en-
 “ tirely a free gift ; nor does the call of Christ
 “ imply the contrary ; which may be considered
 “ either as external, as a preacher of the word,
 “ and as such was not always attended to and ef-
 “ fectual, but often slighted and rejected ; or as
 “ internal, being by the power of his grace ef-
 “ fectual ; for he who called to repentance, as a

" minister of the word, as a prince and a savior,
 " was able to give it ; and which none but a di-
 " vine person is able to do. Now since this was the
 " end of his coming into the world, his conduct
 " in conversing with publicans and sinners was in
 " all respects highly to be justified." Taking this
 portion of divine writ in the view now set forth,
 it cannot be produced as an authority to limit the
 gospel call : for wherein lies the difference between
 the pharisee and publican if both be so whole in
 their own eyes, as to reject the remedy ? But that
 this was, and still is the case we have no room to
 doubt. Are we not divinely informed that the
 Son of God came unto his own, and his own re-
 ceived him not ? *John i. 11.* and doth not the
 prophet *Isaiah* cry out, chap. liii. 1. *Who hath be-*
lieved our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord
revealed ? If this be a fact, it is beyond all con-
 troversy that the gospel call, testimony or witness,
 is obligatory on all who providentially are, though
 not spiritually, yet in a rational way, acquainted
 therewith. And as repentance is the manifesta-
 tion, fruit, and effect of an holy principle, yea
 as it is a turning from an hatred to a love of God ;
 from an aversion to the commands, institutions,
 and people of God, to a delight and complacency in
 them ; the gospel then calls on sinners, dead in
 their sins and trespasses, which voice they will
 hear, when the law through the Spirit has done
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its office on their conscience to return to God, by faith in the atonement and righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, as to a most loving Father, for all that grace necessary to produce such a repentance, provided that the same divine agent, before spoken of, as a spirit of faith, attend his own call with power unto the heart. This is clear from the 12th and 13th verses following. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And for a further proof, that this call without the energy of the divine Spirit will be ineffectual, add to the above what Truth itself declares, *Matt. xx. 16. Many be called but few chosen.* Repentance, as expressed in *Luke xv. 7.* is not to be considered prior to faith, as mentioned in *2 Tim. ii. 25.* "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," *Beza* expounds thus:—"The true knowledge of the true God in the gospel, distinguished from that which is natural." Observe *Dr. Guyse* on the place:—"In hope (says he) that God may in due season convince them of their error, and bring them to a sense of the evil and danger of persisting in it, and at length relinquish it, and embrace and boldly profess the

“ the truth as it is in Jesus.” To which we may add a change from spiritual darkness and death to a spiritual perception of the truth in the gospel, that is, such as is productive of all those vital acts peculiar to the Lord’s own people. Beza’s observation and comment on *Luke* xxiv. 47. appears without exception: the repentance and remission here expressed, says he, is “ A repentance and
 “ remission in consequence of Christ speaking in
 “ the gospel, and manifesting himself savingly;
 “ for as he is in name so is he in reality.” To which scripture *Acts* v. 31. is not dissimilar.— After Peter had recited his entrance amongst the Gentiles, the occasion and by what authority he went unto them, then the Brethren who were of the circumcision hearing these things cried out saying, *Acts* xi. 18. “ Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,” that is, a living repentance, or what evidences spiritual life. For *Dr. Gill* on this place well observes, “ It is
 “ not by repentance that men live spiritually, but
 “ by faith in Christ Jesus, though true repentance
 “ is an evidence of spiritual life, and begins with
 “ it.” The following scripture relating to the point in hand appears rather more intricate. *Acts* xx. 21. “ Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ:” if by repentance be intended a purpose of moral amendment

amendment through love ; for this passage seems to be a description of the order of the apostle's ministry. *Dr. Gill* observes on this part of God's word, viz. " Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The former of these is not a legal repentance, but an evangelical one, which flows from a sense of the love of God, and an application of pardoning grace and mercy, and is always attended with hope, at least of interest in it, and as here with faith in Christ Jesus. It lies in a true sight and sense of sin as exceeding sinful, being contrary to the nature and law of God, and a deformation of the image of God in man, as well as followed with dreadful and pernicious consequences ; and in a godly sorrow for it, as it is committed against a God of infinite purity and holiness, and of love, grace and mercy, and it shows itself in shame for sin, and blushing at it, and in an ingenuous confession of it, and forsaking it : and the latter of these is not an historical faith, or an assent of the mind to whatsoever is true concerning the person, office, and grace of Christ ; but it is a spiritual act of the soul upon him ; it is a looking and going out to him, a laying hold and leaning on him, and trusting in him for grace, righteousness, peace, pardon, life, and salvation. Now these two were the sum of the apostle's ministry ; this is

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“ a breviary or compendium of it ; a form of
 “ found words held fast and published by him.”
 By these observations it is clear, that by repent-
 ance here expressed the Doctor intended a repent-
 ance which is evangelical and not legal, which
 springs from some degree or measure of true faith,
 and does not precede or go before it, and having
 shewn the nature of the apostle’s ministry he sub-
 joins “ And as these two go together as doctrines
 “ in the ministry of the word, they go together in
 “ the experience of the saints, where the one is
 “ there the other is, they are wrought in the soul
 “ at one and the same time, by one and the same
 “ hand; the one is not before the other in order of
 “ time, however it may be in order of working, or as
 “ to visible observation; repentance is mentioned
 “ before faith, not that it precedes it, though it
 “ may be discerned in its outward acts before it;
 “ yet faith, as to its inward exercise on Christ, is
 “ full as early, if not earlier; souls first look to
 “ Christ by faith, and then they mourn in tears
 “ of evangelical repentance, *Zech. xii. 10.* though
 “ the order of the gospel ministry is very fitly here
 “ expressed, which is first to lay before sinners
 “ the evil of sin, and their danger by it, in order
 “ to convince of it, and bring to repentance for
 “ it; and then to direct and encourage them to
 “ faith in Christ Jesus, as in the case of the gaoler,
 “ *Acts xvi. 29, 30.*” What the Doctor here in-
 tends

tends by repentance (unless legal repentance) is uncertain : if no knowledge of the gospel, which is true and genuine, preceded, how is it evangelical ? If these did, then the faith here mentioned probably intends the faith of evidence. He adds
 “ And this is generally speaking, the order and
 “ method in which the holy Spirit proceeds, he
 “ is first a spirit of conviction and illumination,
 “ he shews to souls the exceeding sinfulness of sin,
 “ causes them to lothe it, and themselves for it,
 “ and humbles them under a sense of it : and then
 “ he is a spirit of faith, he reveals Christ unto
 “ them as God’s way of salvation, and works faith
 “ in them to believe in him.” If by the illumination here intended be such, as in its nature is something more than legal, provided we refer to the former part of this exposition, and compare it with the latter, we may conclude the meaning of the Doctor in the words following, viz.—
 “ By revealing Christ unto them as God’s way of
 “ salvation, and working faith in them to believe
 “ in him,” to be, a clearer revelation, and a greater degree of faith, than aforementioned.—
Beza’s exposition seems to vary ; he says, “ By
 “ repentance here is intended the whole of true
 “ conversion unto God, and by faith in Jésus
 “ Christ, Christ the material, and faith the instrumental cause of salvation.” Whatever be the real, true, and genuine meaning of this passage,
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sage, 'tis hard to conceive that the apostle preached to the Jews, or to the heathen nations the doctrine of repentance toward God, without giving some proper encouragement thereunto. It appears that in this our fallen state, all amendment springs from hope of mercy in the Divine Being either true or false, which scripture example corroborates, *Jer. ii. 25. There is no hope. No: for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.* Now to imagine the apostle would doctrinally propose a false foundation is inexcusable, seeing a presumptuous hope is as dishonorable to God, as to be without any: for if the latter be a denial of his mercy, the former is a rejection of his truth, holiness and justice. Scripture testimony informs us *Job viii. 13. that the hypocrites hope shall perish,* therefore to suppose that a repentance which arises from an hope not truly founded on a Savior revealed in the gospel should be manifestative of special grace, is to deny our Lord's own declaration, *John xiv. 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*—Indeed a well authenticated information of divine mercy to be obtained, obliges to repentance; calls upon the children of men to stop in the career of their sins and transgressions: but though it so doth it will never have a genuine effect upon them, until the way wherein it is shewn is spiritually perceived and embraced. Every thing
short

short of this engenders a false expectation which consequent on the legal convictions of the divine Spirit, will set and prompt a man to work, repent, and turn (though not truly but in imagination) to God, until he find through the further illumination of that divine agent, that his hope is groundless, and his expectations are delusive; which will be immediately succeeded by despair, if the Lord through gospel grace do not appear: therefore without doubt in the scripture passage now considered the repentance there spoken of, if evangelical must be viewed as the end; and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, the way to that end, unless it be reckoned equivalent to regeneration; or a change of mind from the Jewish dispensation in relation to the Jews, or from the pagan religion and worship in reference to the Gentiles. Several other parts of God's word treat of repentance, but as those which have been already observed are the chief, we will omit them. That wherein the repentance of Judas is recorded, serves to prove that the source thereof was not from a conscience purified, but only alarmed; and that which records the repentance of Esau shews not his repentance to relate to the soul, and the things of another life, but to those of time only. The following passages, viz. *Psalms* xxxiv. 18. li. 17. and *Isaiah* lxxvi. 2. appear to be of the same import with *Matt.* v. 3. and consequently imply the subjects

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jects of the contrition therein observed to be endued with grace, and therefore with real faith in some small degree, though they themselves might judge otherwise : for it is not the perception of the inhabitation of this grace which alone characterizes the true christian, but the possession thereof, whether discerned by him or not. With respect to *Isai.* lv. 7. let it be compared with *Jer.* xxxi. 19. as also *John* xiv. 6. and whatever difficulty may be conceived therein will disappear, especially if what some have thought be true, viz. that it was prophetic of the conversion of the three thousand by Peter's sermon, *Acts* ii. 41. Having finished this inquiry concerning evangelical repentance, it remains to be investigated whether a legal one be not absolutely necessary previous to a belief on Christ through the gospel. Touching this point we may observe, that it gives no title, neither does it render the soul more meet to receive Christ ; yet is it so far necessary, yea absolutely necessary, previous to the grace of the gospel, that no one will regard the call thereof, before he be the subject of such repentance ; this hath been abundantly explained in the first part of this enquiry.—But to return to our general propositions.

Fourthly, Conscience properly enlightened hesitates not to reprove the elect of God before calling, any more than it doth the reprobate, who are the subjects of such illumination.

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This is naturally deducible from what has been already observed concerning the divine law disapproving of the elect, as well as others, previous to their effectual calling. For if all mankind come into the world under the guilt of the first sin of their fœderal head Adam, are equally polluted in consequence thereof, alike incapacitated, either to make satisfaction, or yield obedience to the demands and requirements of that law ; it will unavoidably follow, that there can be no lawful authority for conscience to conclude even of God's people in a natural state, that justice regards them with less displeasure, than those who shall never be partakers of his love ; because a legal state is a state of wrath, sin, and death, and through the law, no mercy, grace or strength is communicated, forasmuch as it is a way shut up and prohibited. Now if any soul should by a supposed conformity to its injunctions conclude the Lord regards it, with the least degree of favor, as he does those who are brought to a saving acquaintance with Jesus ; or that such conformity is acceptable to God, or deserves grace to render its person or his ways well-pleasing to the Lord, certainly draws an inference from fallacious principles, and errs for want of greater and clearer conviction of the law's demands and injunctions : for this error is through the blindness of the conscience, which if properly informed would have

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spoken the language of the law itself, and given its verdict correspondent to the voice thereof, and no otherwise. This is clearly taught by the 13th article of the Church of England:—" Works
 " done before the grace of Christ, and the in-
 " spiration of his Spirit are not pleasant to God,
 " forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus
 " Christ, neither do they make men meet to re-
 " ceive grace, or (as the school authors say) de-
 " serve grace of congruity: yea rather for that
 " they are not done as God hath willed and com-
 " manded them to be done, we doubt not but
 " they have the nature of sin."—"Tis certain
 there is a vast disparity between the moral and
 religious conduct of one natural man, and ano-
 ther: and although the law may not, yea will not
 equally condemn all such persons, they being not
 in every respect violators alike of its injunctions
 and prohibitions, even materially considered; yet
 with relation to purity of motive and end, it will
 find all (void of the grace of God) wholly and en-
 tirely deficient. Hence it necessarily follows,
 that conscience properly informed cannot give
 verdict in favor of any man in this state, with re-
 spect to any one action, word, thought, inclina-
 tion or affection, so as to pronounce it pure and
 agreeable to the demands of the law. Wherefore
 the people of God uncalled have no better hope
 than others.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, No man dare say he is reprobated, who hath not committed the unpardonable sin.

That this is a truth is evident from our Lord's own words, *Mat. xii. 31. All manner of sin, and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.* What can possibly induce any of the children of Adam to conclude they are rejected, while such a declaration from the lip of truth stands on record? Sinners unawakened and unconvinced think little either of God's everlasting love or hatred; they are too much attached to the principles connatural to the human species to admit such reflections, unless it be to explode and condemn them. No doctrine can be presented to the minds of hardened sinners that is so disgustful, and against which their enmity is so readily excited as the divine sovereignty touching the eternal state of the individuals of mankind. Where is the heart which can relish it? We may admit it into our judgments, but can we approve thereof? We can scarcely think the Lord righteous in appointing any to certain and endless misery and punishment, unless we ourselves be not only the subjects of grace, but are also conscious thereof. The natural heart militates against it with all its power. Who are so much hated in the world, who so despised and vilified, as the zealous defenders of this doctrine? Surely, were it not for a kind Providence, for the protection

protection the Lord is pleased to afford, one such person would not be permitted to remain in the world. Men therefore who are so inclinable to discountenance this great truth, draw not the awful inference that they are divinely rejected; far from it, their principles of religion are of a quite contrary nature, their hopes and expectations are built on such a foundation, as is utterly inconsistent with (as they are apt to esteem it) so horrible a doctrine. Hardened sinners are without all doubt in great jeopardy, and are not the self-righteous also? Yea are they not more so? Yet who will dare affirm this of that individual either of the one or the other class to be reprobated? Doth not divine history and frequent observation teach us, that the Lord hath and doth call effectually some of all sorts? If so, no man hath any just authority to say of the most noted profligate, or proudest pharisee, that such are cast-aways. If then it be not lawful so to judge one of another, neither is it right to affirm thus of ourselves, even when we are the subjects of an enlightened conscience, for that is the season when satan and our own hearts are most likely to tempt us to it. In reality it is not lawful at any time, nevertheless when under deep convictions from the law, and Spirit of God, then is the season to expect the fiercest and most powerful assaults; the enemy will not be backward to embrace the opportunity.—

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As he before buoyed up the man by false principles and hopes, will now suggest he is too vile to be saved, that his sins are either so numerous or atrocious, that it cannot be the Lord looks upon and regards him, as he doth his people; or that he ever will: if this do not quite discourage, he will insinuate that it is now too late, and that none of God's chosen are permitted to commit such horrible iniquities, or to continue so long in a sinful course as he hath done. To all these temptations is not the declaration before noticed a sufficient answer? "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" or if this will not do let us connect therewith, *Isai. liii. 6.* "And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all."

The soul perceiving the number or atrociousness of his iniquities to be insufficient pleas for so awful a conclusion, the enemy may then, to close all, make unbelief an argument. But where is the man who dares to say, though at present in a state of unbelief, he was not elected from eternity? Can such a one affirm, he shall never believe in Christ, though he be destitute of special illumination at present? The Lord both can and may enlighten him, and he that now is a stranger to the knowledge of himself, as well as the salvation of the Lord's people, may (if God hath so determined) very quickly evidence himself the subject of both. God's special election, and man's utter inability,

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instead

Instead of limiting the gospel call, are the doctrines alone that can encourage to believe and embrace it, provided that the discovery of electing grace to the individuals concerned therein consists in an unfeigned belief of the above call. Deny God's sovereignty in choosing, you immediately establish the errors of *Pelagius*, and suppose that man hath some little strength left, and is capable if he please to fulfil the terms, and embrace the Savior, and that if he do not it is his own fault. This at once strikes at the universality of the gospel message; as on such a principle none would be called thereby, but those who have fulfilled the conditions, and do dispose themselves by the power of their free-will to receive Jesus. Though the foregoing observations appear of sufficient validity to prove the point here asserted, nevertheless we will adduce one argument more, and close, viz. that the elect of God are only known to him previous to their effectual calling. To evince this truth by scripture testimony beyond what has been already done would be needless, as all Calvinists acknowledge it, and they who are not of that stamp deny the doctrine itself, yet will it be necessary to draw the inference following, viz.—That if the objects of eternal election, while in a natural state, be only known unto God to be so, none of the children of men in that state, can with propriety affirm that they from eternity were not

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not by him chosen. For if they dare not say thus of others, why then of themselves? If then God's elect people when in a natural state be not distinguished from others to be his people by any particular mark or character; if the law of God equally disapprove of them as it does of others, and conscience enlightened know no difference; and if they be then only known unto the Lord, and that no son or daughter of Adam in the state aforementioned dare say they are not elected, it must remain a certain truth, that the gospel wherever it comes speaks to every one who either reads or hears it.

C H A P. IV.

The Call of the Gospel is free and gracious.

HAVING in the preceding chapter finished our inquiry touching the universality of the gospel call, our business is at present to consider what hath been further asserted, viz.

That it is also free and gracious.

This is obvious from the epithet given it, 2 Cor. vi. 1. "We then as workers together with him beseech you also, that ye receive not the

grace of God *χάρις* is in vain." Likewise *Titus* ii. 11. "For the grace of God (expressed by the same original words as in the preceding passage) that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men." As the word here used excludes all merit, and signifies a free gift, this appellation pertaining not only to the blessings which come by the gospel, but to the word of the Lord's grace also, *Acts* xiv. 3. argues the freedom thereof as a dispensation. Moreover the freedom of this call may be inferred likewise

First, From the nature of it.

Secondly, From what the word declares concerning the grace of regeneration, through which the Lord's people are in his appointed time obedient to the voice of his gospel.

First, The freedom of the gospel call may be inferred from the nature of the invitation, which appears to be not only of them who are already partakers of grace, but of those also who are entirely destitute thereof. *Isaiah* lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea come buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Here may be intended two sorts of persons, the one that have grace already, the other that are destitute thereof. That the former
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are invited none will doubt, but that the latter are so favored many question. Yet if the objection of such persons be admitted, in what way can we determine the one received grace, and that the other is to expect it? If the gospel call extend to none but those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and this desire is concluded to be the fruit of regenerating grace, how can such a sentiment be reconciled with *Rom. iv. 5. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* For if the call of the gospel be limited, it behoves every one who hears it to examine whether he be or be not the person to whom it is directed, lest he should be guilty of intrusion, or of taking that for which he is not warranted; which method if pursued naturally infers, that every one thus qualified who believes for justification cannot believe to that end, and purpose, but as a person conscious that grace, yea special grace, hath distinguished him from others. Whether this be the genuine intendment of the text let the candid judge. Without doubt they who have already believed are invited to believe again and again, and to reiterate their acts of faith as frequent as they stand in need; but the question is, whether the scripture last cited do not respect the first act of trust for justification, rather than after acts thereof to that purpose, which if it doth, by the thirsty

thirsty, and he that hath no money must be intended two different characters; or if by the thirsty be intended not only him who hath a gracious thirst, but chiefly and primarily them who pant for those things that will not profit; the inference deducible will be the same, which construction the following verse seems to countenance. In the *Revelations*, chap. xxii. 17. we have a similar passage.—“ And the Spirit and the Bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” The latter clause of this verse is a sufficient proof of the matter in hand, viz. the freedom of the gospel call, provided whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely, intends not a mark or character, whereby one man may consider himself invited rather than another. That it doth, few sound divines would affirm; they would rather say, though the will is from God, yet the person who receives, accepts not the blessing from a consciousness that such a will is wrought within him, but warranted by this passage as a free grant, he takes the blessings thereby held forth to be accepted and embraced. That this conclusion is not novel, let us see how this clause hath been expounded.—“ The
 “ water of life designs the free favor and love of
 “ God, and the communications and displays of
 “ it in the new Jerusalem state, even the com-
 “ fort,

“ fort, refreshment and glories of that state : to
 “ take it is to enjoy it, to partake of it, being led
 “ unto it, and that being given to them by Christ
 “ the Lamb in the midst of the throne, chap. vii.
 “ 17. and xxi. 6. and which is had freely, with-
 “ out money, and without price, as in *Isai*. lv. 1.
 “ which seems to be referred to ; for the happi-
 “ ness of this state, as well as eternal life, is the
 “ free gift of God through Christ ; and the per-
 “ sons encouraged to partake of it are whosoever
 “ will, that is, whosoever has a will to divine
 “ and spiritual things, wrought in him by God,
 “ for no man has such a will of himself, *Phil.* ii.
 “ 13. though this does not so much regard the
 “ character of the person, that may take of the
 “ water of life, as the free manner in which he may
 “ take it. So the Jews are wont to express them-
 “ selves, when they would signify the liberty that
 “ might be used, or the free way in which any
 “ thing might be taken, particularly of the law
 “ and the things of it, [whosoever has a mind to
 “ take, let him come and take] as it is said *Isai.*
 “ lv. 1. “ Ho, every one that thirsteth,” &c.
 “ that is, he is free to take, he is welcome to it,
 “ which passage referred to is thus paraphrased by
 “ the targumist, [Ho, whosoever will learn, let
 “ him come and learn.”] Thus *Dr. Gill* on the
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Secondly,

Secondly, The freedom of the gospel call may be inferred from what the word declares touching the grace of regeneration, through which the Lord's people are, in his appointed time, obedient to the voice of the gospel.

Respecting infants it relates not to our present purpose. The matter of our inquiry is confined to those who are capable of the exercise of their rational faculties: this being fixed we will inquire what the word of God declares concerning the quickening and regenerating of dead sinners. If we turn to *John* v. 25. we shall find, that it is the voice of the Son of God, which is attended with this mighty operation. The words are, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."—That the voice here spoken of was the voice of the gospel preached by the Son of God himself, that the dead here mentioned were they who were dead in trespasses and sins, cannot be questioned, if due regard be had to the verse preceding, viz. verse 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." If therefore the gospel of Christ, when attended by the power of the divine Spirit, be instrumental to quicken dead sinners, then this gospel calls upon all to awake
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and come to Christ, whether they spiritually hear it or not, and consequently must be a free gospel; as a man spiritually dead can do nothing either in a way of desert or meetness, whereby he might acquire this life. As the voice of Christ to the man in the gospel who had the withered hand could not be disobeyed without imputation of guilt, as we may well suppose; so the message of grace, if received not into the heart by those to whom it cometh, it will increase their condemnation.—

Were the obedience of faith the gospel requires above the rational faculties of mankind; was there no susceptibility in their souls of the doctrines of grace, objections might with propriety be made to the message of the gospel: but seeing the death is spiritual, and not a deprivation of man's mental and rational powers, he may reasonably be called upon to do that which he hath no spiritual ability to perform. Again; the promulgation of the gospel is declared the mean or instrument, in the hand of God, of our new birth, *1 Pet. i. 23.*

“ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” Therefore it must be free; for how could it be embraced by any on account of any goodness in them, who immediately before the hearing or reading thereof were in a state of spiritual death? For an elucidation of this passage compare *1 Pet. i. 3.* with *Rom. iv. 24.*

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To all which let us add *James* i. 18. together with the judicious *Dr. Guise's* exposition thereof.—“ We
 “ who believe, have a most eminent and endear-
 “ ing demonstration, that the best of all blessings
 “ derive from him ; as it is not from any wisdom,
 “ or power, worthiness, or merit in us, but
 “ merely of his own good will, and sovereign
 “ pleasure, according to his abundant mercy, that
 “ he has regenerated and begotten us to a lively
 “ hope of an everlasting inheritance, *John* i. 13.
 “ *1 Pet.* i. 3, 4. by means of the gospel, which is
 “ his true and faithful word, and is rendered ef-
 “ ficacious in the hand of the Spirit, for producing
 “ the new birth, and all the holiness and happi-
 “ nesses that ensue upon it, (see *John* xvii. 17. *1*
 “ *Cor.* iv. 15. and *1 Pet.* i. 23.) And he has done
 “ this for us, that we like the first fruits under
 “ the law, might be consecrated to him as his pe-
 “ culiar property, and the most excellent kind of
 “ all his creatures.” Compare this and the afore-
 going passages with our Lord's own words to Nico-
 demus, *John* iii. 18. and the mistakes that other-
 wise might accrue concerning the genuine intend-
 ment of the following expressions, viz: “ the
 voice of the Son of God,” “ the word of God,”
 and “ the word of truth,” will be obviated. From
 all which it is clear and evident that the gospel
 cannot be attended with any prerequisites, seeing
 there is no medium between a state of condemna-
 tion

tion and justification, of spiritual death and spiritual life, and that the mean of passing from the one to the other of these states is not the law but the gospel. In relation to the apprehensions and feelings of God's people, and the judgment they pass on themselves, it may be observed, these are very foreign to the thing in hand. What the saints of God perceive first in their own experience, they may indeed judge to be first implanted by the Lord: faith in the heart of the newly converted may well be compared to the seed hidden, which discovers itself by an unfeigned repentance; but that repentance should be the root of faith, because its subject is first conscious of repentance is in no wise conclusive. We might as soon suppose a man in absolute despair can repent. That he that is thoroughly enlightened by the law, and hath not the least discovery of the gospel, must be in that circumstance, is a maxim that cannot be gainsaid; wherefore the call of the gospel is not only an universal, (which hath been before proved) but a free and gracious call.

C H A P. V.

The Word of Truth, or Gospel of Salvation, is an undeserved Call.

AS the nature of our present subject is of the last importance, and to be mistaken therein of the most dangerous tendency, we shall therefore not content ourselves with what hath been already observed, but in the next place inquire as proposed, whether

It be an undeserved call.

That it is undeserved, is manifest from what hath been already noticed to evince its universality and freedom. Indeed where there is no exterior revelation of the gospel, persons without it cannot be called to embrace the great things thereby set forth : that this is the case of multitudes no one will question. The Lord hath not in his word prohibited any of his ministers to profelyte barbarous and ignorant nations to the christian faith : in this respect the administration of this call is as free as the light with which we are surrounded, or the air in which we breathe ; yet in this he shews his sovereignty, in as much as that, which by his word

word is approved of, by his providence is frequently inadmissible. How comes it to pass that at this present time the whole empire of Japan, that numerous body of people the Chinese, and various savage nations, are not favored even with the knowledge of the letter of the gospel? Certainly this is not to be attributed to any want of power or wisdom in the Lord. It is but for him to speak, and the world shall be enlightened even with the light of salvation. *Psalm lxxviii. 11. The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it.* They who oppose the divine sovereignty touching the eternal election of his people should account for the providence of God with relation to the outward manifestation of his truth in reference to both time and place. Under the Jewish dispensation was not the whole Gentile world in the grossest spiritual obscurity, destitute of the means of salvation; which is the case as before noticed of many nations at present? Is there not discriminating goodness displayed in that Great Britain is not now involved either in the darkness of Mahometanism or shadows of Popery? Who can account for the difference which subsists between one part of this kingdom and another? Are there not many cities, towns, and villages, covered over with Arminian obscurity, whilst others bask in the blaze of gospel light? Will any say that one nation, city, town, or village, is
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more deserving than another? 'Tis true the scripture doth inform us, that when the gospel hath been universally rejected by a people, it hath been removed from them; yet this doth not imply that they were worse by nature than others; neither the means, nor grace of the means are afforded according to man's desert, for he hath none; else why was a persecuting Paul followed with special mercy, when a careless Gallio was left to perish in his iniquity? Surely, no natural condemned sinner in the least differs from another, but by the legal operations of the divine Spirit, to answer the Lord's purposes of providence in the world, and to maintain that order which he hath decreed and appointed. Jerusalem exceeded all the cities on the earth for iniquity, yet must the gospel be first preached there. Unrepenting Capernaum must be exalted in such privileges which would have been effectual upon a Sodom or Gomorrha: not that any difference could have subsisted between the one or the other, but through the divine interposition. Doth not the case of the Lord's ancient people manifest the great degeneracy of human nature, seeing many of them are surrounded with gospel light, but to discern it they have no visive faculty, and will not exercise the rational faculty they have, unless it be to oppose and exclude it? That this disposition is not wholly peculiar to them is apparent, since

Since numberless individuals of the nations aforementioned cannot be excused. It is reasonable to suppose that not a few of them have heard of Christ, the sacred scripture, and of the followers of Jesus, yet have they not rejected both the one and the other with disdain, whilst others have enwrapped themselves in a fond conceit of the certain truth of the religion of their ancestors either Pagan or Mahometan, and have no disposition to inquire after or examine into the truth of that which is able to make them wise to salvation?—How far this disease is common let experience testify. But to resume the subject.

That the gospel call is undeserved will be evident, if we consider what it calls from, which is

First, Our own worthiness.

Secondly, Our sufficiency. And in the next place, what it calls to, viz,

Thirdly, To trust in the worthiness and sufficiency of another, both for grace and glory.

First, It appears to be unmerited, in as much as it calls us away from trusting for life to our own worthiness.

This is the grand cause why the human heart doth not relish it. Pride and self-righteousness have

have so possessed the human breast, that nothing less than omnipotence can dethrone them. The Lord intended man's happiness in a state of innocence in subservience to his own glory, but he by his fall infringed the divine prerogative. *Gen. iii. 5, 6.* "For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened : and ye shall be as Gods knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat ; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." By pride we all fell in our first head, and how this capital evil entwines about our hearts, sad experience doth wofully testify. Why did the Jews reject the Lord Jesus ? Was it not from this principle ? They expected a Messiah, who should set them above all the nations of the earth round about, render them free of the Roman yoke, and bring all into subjection to their authority ; but being disappointed of this their expectation in the person of Jesus, though he gave the most irrefragable proofs of his Messiahship, what do they say ? *John xi. 48.* "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Notwithstanding this malign principle, connatural to the whole human species, reason dictates to every thinking

thinking mortal, that some infectious evil hath overspread the race of mankind. The wiser heathen so concluded, yet never could explore the occasion and origin thereof. They were ready to acknowledge that man in his primæval state was in other circumstances than in their day, and that the moral obliquity, which fell under their observation, was not originally the unhappy attendant of his natural existence. Calm reflection both heretofore hath, and still doth afford the same verdict, and therefore it is become the universal sentiment of mankind that the Deity is offended, and that men in general stand in need of an atonement. Though natural reason suggests from the dictates of an accusing conscience, that all is not well between the Supreme Governor of the Universe and our own souls, yet where is the man who will acknowledge that all relating to him of a moral nature is entirely ill, and that he never was the subject, either of one internal or external act but what was sinful? Pride will not suffer us to regard ourselves as poor bankrupts: we are for compounding matters with the Lord. Many can receive the gospel, but then it must be in their own way. As the Jews could have received a triumphing Messiah, but not a suffering one; so we can receive a gospel which will allow some room to boast of our worthiness and sufficiency, so it doth not rob us thereof altogether. Hence

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the readiness among men to embrace for gospel, the New, instead of the Old Testament : 'tis a milder law, say they, which if we be obedient unto, Christ shall be of avail to us. Any scheme of salvation that is consistent with our limited apprehensions of divine purity, holiness, justice, and mercy ; but not as these divine excellencies exist in God, meets with our approbation. What is the language of this but a declaration of rebellion, an abjuration of him as our sovereign, and a tacit avowal, that as his glory was tarnished by the breach of the first, it shall not be exalted by us through the redemption of the second covenant, even the covenant of grace ? No one who will give himself a moment's time and pain to reflect, but must allow that the Lord has proposed a manifestation of his glory, or what he is, in the redemption of the human race ; therefore he will be known in all, whom he brings to his kingdom above, to be infinite in justice and mercy also ; but alas ! such a phrenzy and madness hath captivated the minds of men in general, that they will not suffer it. If the Lord will save them to the disparagement of both they are contented ; to be saved otherwise they care not at all for it : but why all this boasting against the wisdom and goodness of God ? If the gospel were calculated to deprive us of any real excellency, there might be room to object ; but when it shall appear, that it

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only calls us from an imaginary, to the enjoyment of a real and substantial good, which will enrich us to eternity, why should we be offended with it? That this is a truth scripture loudly declares, *Rev. iii. 17.* "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." If the Lord speak thus of a declined church, certainly it well suits those persons who are yet in their natural state. Again. The apostle Paul speaking of the old man, or corrupt principle within, says, *Rom. vii. 18.* *I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.* Was not the apostle mistaken here? What! was the apostle, when he was destitute of Christ, and before he believed on him, totally and altogether void of every good thing? If so, how comes it to pass that almost all the world should be of a different opinion? For if they have no more to boast of by nature, than the apostle had when in his natural state, certainly every unregenerate man who continues to lean on his own imaginary worthiness, to the rejection of the gospel call, will be found at

last to have been grasping not that which will preserve him from the deluge of divine wrath and indignation, but a vapour, a shadow, a nothing.— Therefore as the gospel calls us not from depending on any real self worthiness but only the semblance of it, from thinking we possess what we have not, and from leaning on vanity, it certainly is an **unmerited call**.

Secondly, It calls us from all self sufficiency. Self worthiness and self sufficiency are inseparably connected. He that esteems some righteousness necessary to entitle to Christ, hesitates not to conclude that it is in the power of his will to perform it. These are the leading sentiments of most men; some will go further and affirm, that with respect to knowledge touching the welfare of the soul, there is rather too much in the world than too little, that mankind need not be informed what they ought to do, but they should be more careful to do what they know, and that the only reason why they do it not is, because they will not be attentive and take pains with themselves, will not labor and endeavor to put that in practice they are convinced is their duty: such who are of a deistical turn so speak. However, few there are but will affirm, they are capable of doing what is good and to do it effectually, if the Lord will be pleased only to assist them, which when done they think shall render

der themselves fit objects of his mercy. These consider man in his natural state not as dead, but wounded, debilitated, and enfeebled, and therefore he is to endeavor and strive with himself to the utmost of his ability, and to implore the divine assistance to enable him to perform the prerequisites of the gospel. Such persons need a further legal illumination, they see not the spirituality of the law and what it requires ; if they did, they would be convinced that it is impossible any good act could be performed by them, for which instead of meriting the divine favor, God dealing with them according to the nature thereof, they would not sink under his just displeasure for ever. Besides such either know not or do not believe the word of God concerning man's unworthiness and inability ; if they did, they would readily confess with the apostle, that in their flesh, nay in them, being yet without grace, dwelleth no good thing ; but before they are brought to be assured that their hearts and natures are spiritually dead, they will be ever dreaming themselves capable of living actions.— That this is the true state of man before grace and faith through the gospel, evidently appears from *John* i. 12, 13. “ But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”—More
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might be observed touching man's utter inability whilst in a natural state, and prior to the reception of grace through the gospel; yet as this point hath been largely treated in the first part of this inquiry, proceed we then to take notice

Thirdly, That as the gospel calls us from a trust in our own imaginary worthiness and sufficiency, it calls to a true and spiritual confidence in the worthiness and sufficiency of another, even of the Lord Jesus Christ, both for grace and glory. To trust the eternal welfare on a righteousness and ability, which in reality we are not the subjects of, the meer child of fancy, begotten by the pride connatural to man in his present fallen state, what can be more awful! Certainly in this respect we may well be compared to beggars, who dream they are rich, opulent and powerful princes, encircled with all that may be esteemed grateful and pleasing, yet when they awake find it but a dream.— Therefore to be called from such a delusive dependence, to trust in the righteousness of one who not only was in his human nature immaculate, spotless both in heart and life, who in that nature suffered and died for us, after a life of entire conformity and obedience to the law of God in our room and stead, but all this effected in personal union with the divine Word, co-eternal and co-equal with the Father. Moreover to be called from a reliance on an ability we really are not the subjects

subjects of, to expect from the Lord Jesus Christ,
 on account of his satisfaction only, all grace in
 time that may be to God's glory, and our soul's
 profit ; and finally, the free gift of heaven, both
 as a state of holiness and consummate happiness.
 Surely such a call must be allowed, unless by those
 who are void of natural reason, to be an unme-
 rited and undeserved call ! Were we fully sensi-
 ble of what we are by nature and practice, did we
 perceive ourselves under the righteous sentence of
 the eternal Jehovah, in the grave of sin as a mighty
 conqueror, held fast by the adamant chains of
 a corrupt nature, we should not hesitate a mo-
 ment in acquiescing in the propriety of the pre-
 sent proposition: but alas! the pride of our hearts
 through the mighty working of unbelief hath such
 a dominion over the whole soul, that we are as
 naturally inclined sinfully to presume, (as the
 sparks fly upward: and until the law, through the
 divine agency, enlighten our benighted hearts,
 we will not let go our false and delusive confi-
 dence, which when we are obliged to relinquish,
 unavoidably fall into the contrary extreme, an
 absolute despair of God's mercy ; and should for
 ever there remain did not the Lord call us by his
 gospel, and attend it with some special power
 to our consciences.

C H A P. VI.

The Gospel Call is a merciful Call,

WHAT we are next called upon to attend to will be allowed by most in word, but not in reality, viz.

That the gospel call is a merciful call.

That it well deserves this epithet appears from *Luke i. 76, 77, 78.* "And thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by (or for) the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us." For if John, in this passage, be pointed out as an instrument to prepare the way of the Lord by publishing that gospel, which reveals the mercy of God to poor sinners, then the call thereof most certainly is entitled to the epithet merciful: for confirmation whereof compare *Titus iii. 3.* to the 8th verse, with *1 Cor. iv. 15.* However as there be various opinions among men concerning the mercy of God, which by the gospel they are exhorted to trust in; some

Some concluding that though they maintain human nature to be not without some excellencies, and that mankind using their natural powers aright may perform some actions truly good, or which have a certain degree of goodness in them, and the mercy of God in Christ to be rightly viewed, though it be regarded only, as pardoning for Christ's sake what shall be found deficient : whilst others hesitate not to affirm, that where there is any merit relative to eternal salvation, the subject of that merit cannot be esteemed an object of divine mercy. Let us make the matter the theme of our present inquiry, and explore if possible who are the proper and sole objects thereof. Now before this subject be prosecuted it will be necessary to make some observations on the word itself. Mercy cannot be conceived of in its display unless some object in misery exist, on which it is exercised; how else doth it differ from love, grace, and goodness ? In the original of the New Testament it is expressed frequently by the word *ἐλεος*, which *Beza* says, is significant of every kind of good things, with which men are blessed by God freely. *Turnovius* notices that the word as relating to God, denotes pity of every kind, and endless benignity. *Leigh* in his *Critica Sacra* remarks, that the Seventy generally used it in translating the Hebrew word *רחם*, which he interprets, a sacred affection of mercy, pity, grace, benignity, and bountiful

good will towards any without respect of merit: it is, says he, that benignity or beneficence which one is obliged unto by no legal necessity: this is plainly unmerited and not due, and altogether free favor. The Seventy have likewise used it to express the Hebrew word *רחם*, *Psaln* vi. 2. The root of which the above author translates by *miser-tus*, *gratificatus*, *gratificatus*, *gratia profectus fuit*, *doluit*, &c. and says it imports to do a thing gratis. Respecting the original of the words tender mercy expressed in *Luke* i. 78. *Zonchy* hath an observation worthy of regard: it is (says he) expressive of such a kind of affection as parents are fraught withal, when they see their children in any extremity. From all which may be fairly deduced, that the word mercy as applicable to God is manifestative of his nature, and also declares that when displayed it is in the deliverance of the miserable: this obviously corroborated by another original word used to point out the divine mercy in several parts of scripture, as *2 Cor.* i. 3. *ὁ πατήρ τῶν οὐκ ἐλπίμων*, *Col.* iii. 12. *πολλὰ ἔχει οὐκ ἐλπίμων*, *Luke* vi. 36. also *Rom.* xii. 1. *διὰ τῶν οὐκ ἐλπίμων*. It is translated "by the mercy" but the Greek word is in the plural number *per miserationes*, *Chrysostr.* *Theop.* *Orig.* Though there be in God *miserationes multe*, yet there is but one mercy which is his essence, from whence issue *motus misericordiae*. See *Leigh's Critica Sacra*.—

Having obtained by the foregoing remarks some

Information touching the true import of the word mercy, it is necessary to resume the present inquiry, why the gospel message, or word of salvation, may be denominated a merciful call.

First, It may be so considered, because it reveals salvation.

Secondly, Inasmuch as it calls upon the truly miserable in the divine account and estimation.

Thirdly, It well deserves the epithet merciful, since without it no one would be authorized to embrace the blessings it exhibits.

First, The call of the gospel may be denominated merciful, inasmuch as it reveals salvation.

What the salvation is which the gospel discovers hath in the beginning of this inquiry been already investigated, and there proved that none but God's elect people shall enjoy it. The point at present in view, being not so much the rich and inestimable blessings of new covenant grace, as the medium whereby they are conveyed, we pass on to the second argument, viz.

Secondly, That the gospel is a merciful call, inasmuch as it calls upon the truly miserable in the divine account and estimation.

Were we to leave this proposition without en-

largement it would be fully evincive in favor of this truth, viz. that the least merit in reference to the salvation of the soul is inconsistent with the idea of divine mercy. As the greatest worldly happiness cannot denominate a man truly blessed, so, on the contrary, the greatest temporary sufferings and afflictions do not denote a state of true wretchedness. To be approved or disapproved by the Lord is declarative of the one or the other. To say there can be in any man the least degree of merit, or in his acts either internal or external the least measure of goodness in God's account, relative to justification and eternal life, whilst in a natural state, is a self contradictory assertion. A man must either be condemned or justified, spiritually dead or alive : these are extremes, between which there is no medium ; a semi-justification, and to be half-born, in a spiritual sense, are equally to be exploded : the very terms, with respect to the soul, are both preposterous and ridiculous. Therefore all who are not fully justified before God, and born again of him, are the objects which are truly miserable in the divine account, because both they and their actions are under the condemnation of his most righteous law ; and being wholly flesh, they are in a state of utter incapacity to please him, even in a single instance, whether of thought, word, or deed. This being a situation so awful in its consequences, such as renders

renders the subjects thereof in extreme jeopardy of everlasting destruction, consequently such persons being already dead in law, and beyond all possibility in the least measure to deliver themselves, the call of the gospel in all those circumstances being God's call, must have annexed to it the epithet of infinite mercy, seeing the objects thereof are fallen under the displeasure and curse of him, who in holiness and justice is illimitable: all which evidently appears if we consult the following passages of sacred scripture, viz. *Ezek. xvi. 4. 5.* and *6. Luke vii. 42. Rom. viii. 8. 1 Cor. iv. 15. Heb. ii. 3.*

Thirdly, The gospel call well deserves the epithet merciful, since without it no one would be authorized to embrace the blessings exhibited in the gospel. What these are have been hinted at in the course of this inquiry. They may well be compared to a collection of dainties composing the richest feast that ever was provided; yet what avails this most noble of entertainments, unless an invitation be offered. We frequently hear of many a well furnished table, but if we be not bidden, what are we the better? Can we partake thereof uninvited? Who is there that presumes to intrude himself at an earthly entertainment? How much less that which God has provided unless he be bereaved of his senses? Would it be
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any thing short of the most vicious intromission? The more august the provider, and the more costly and expensive the feast, the more are persons disinclined from such a conduct notwithstanding they are in perishing circumstances, unless permission be afforded to that purpose. Surely! All that Christ hath done and suffered, all the blessings promised through his redemption, would have been unprofitable to the children of men, were they not warranted to trust in the one and expect the other: this evinces and proves the great importance of conceiving aright of the gospel message. Many judge that none are invited, but they who are worthy. Others come with the preconception of their own meetness; what is this but popish congruity? And some imagine that none be invited, but they who can discover the marks of election by the fruits of regenerating grace. The two former sentiments have been long since exploded, and those who maintain the latter have not been without their opponents.— What satisfaction can it give to a person, under a very deep work of the spirit of bondage to hear, that the redemption of Christ, and all the blessings thereof are confined to the elect: persuade such a soul that none but the elect are warranted to embrace them, and that all others are strictly prohibited from so doing, what must be the consequence but absolute despair? Would not such a one say,

if

if all mankind are saved, yet if this be not my happy state at present, and I am debarred from faith and trust in Christ the only mediator, I have no hope, I feel myself in perishing circumstances, a sense of the divine displeasure still increases within me, my sins appear more and more glaring, my heart is hourly more obdurate, and I am incapable of repentance. Can a soul in these circumstances have the least footing for trust in God, by the most enlarged and perspicuous representation of the blessedness and privileges of God's people who are already favored with the evidences of electing grace, whilst it remains persuaded that none are permitted or warranted to embrace Christ and his salvation but such? But how did they first confide in him? Was it by virtue of their worthiness or meetness? If by either, how does it appear that their faith had a good beginning? And if they now believe in him, because they are conscious they believed such principles, whence doth it appear that it will have a good ending? However we would not hence infer, that all such are void of the grace of God; certainly believers there are who are much tainted with the doctrine of prerequisites to a saving faith in Christ; also many who maintain that none but those who have already believed are warranted to trust in him, yet such persons may have an interval, through the grace of the divine Spirit, when they embrace the mediator

mediator on different principles, and as the way which God hath provided, not for the righteous only but for sinners: nevertheless the doctrine of divine acceptance ought by all to be considered as the most important and interesting point relative to the christian system, and should excite us to earnest prayer, that we might therein be clearly taught, not in notion only, but truly and experimentally, lest we be found at last to have erred not only in head, but in heart also. As it hath been already evinced that the call under consideration is both universal and free, and that the person calling is none other than the Lord, it amounts to a full and sufficient warrant for sinners of all denominations, to embrace the salvation thereby exhibited, whether they be obedient thereunto or not, and consequently well deserves the epithet here given it: this appears by the apostle Paul's description of the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. "And hath given to us (says he) the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God, was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Being not altogether persuaded that the succeeding verses may be considered in the same light, I pass on with this observation, that the judicious *Dr. Owen* hath so considered them. — By the above apostolic declaration it appears, that the

the mercy of God is not only displayed in Christ on the behalf of his people who have already believed; but to sinners of every rank and denomination, and that it may be manifested yet in very many, may the Spirit of the Lord through the law so convince them of their sin; both of nature and practice, that they may be beaten out of all their false refuges; brought by him through the gospel to receive what the Lord so freely and unreservedly offers, yea invites and commands them to accept.

C H A P. VII.

The Gospel is a righteous Call.

HAVING in the preceding chapters inquired into the universality and freeness of the gospel, and shewn also that it is both an undeserved and merciful call, therefore what remains is lastly to inquire

Whether it be a just and righteous one. In the prosecution of this particular it will be necessary to give the utmost attention, as all which hath been before said wholly depends hereon.— But ere we proceed, it is to be remarked, that the

views which the professed Socinian, Arian, Pelagian, and Arminian entertains of the gospel, are to be taken for granted to be vain and negatory; that the present subject is not handled in reference to a partial, but a full and complete salvation, which, if once begun through faith in the heart, shall certainly and without all doubt be maintained and continued even to death, and then perfected in glory. Having thus premised a few particulars concerning the salvation referred to, it is yet necessary to observe also that the satisfaction of Christ to law and justice is the only medium of conveyance; that without the perfect reconciliation, viz. of an holy, righteous, and just God, not a single son or daughter of Adam could have been delivered from everlasting misery, made the subject of special grace here, and finally brought to eternal blessedness. Moreover we must add, that the redemption of Christ finished and completed on the cross was ingratitude, touching the certain attainment of complete salvation, only in the behalf of elect sinners. That the faith which doth not apprehend Christ crucified for pardon of sin, and his obedience and righteousness as the only true title to grace and glory, cannot be evinced by the divine word to be the faith of God's elect. *John* xiv. 6. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." *Rom.* v. 21. "Even so might grace reign through

through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." To all which let it be added, that without the call of the gospel there could be no true and saving faith; which call although it be not definite as hath been already proved, but a general and indefinite call to believe unto eternal life, yet it is not an unrighteous, vain, and deceptive, but a true and righteous call, which is the point proposed to be evinced. To this proposition many good men have and do object; if say they the Lord was incarnate, did obey, and die solely in behalf of his elect people, with what propriety ought any but his chosen to believe he was incarnate, did obey, and die for them? This renders necessary the following observations, viz,

First, That the revelation of the gospel may, and doth beget a faith in itself, as a system of religion, in contrast and opposition to all other religions: this may fall short of salvation.

Secondly, That the chief end and design thereof is, that men for themselves may embrace, lay hold of, and depend on the mediator it reveals, as the end of the law for righteousness, and by and through him surely expect the grace and glory the Lord hath promised to his elect people.

Thirdly, No person is authorized to affirm he is of the number of those whom Christ redeemed

by his fulfilment of all righteousness, until that person can prove to himself he hath cordially and savingly believed.

First, The revelation of the gospel may, and doth beget a faith in itself, as a system of religion, in contrast and opposition to all other religions.— This may warrantably be asserted, when we consider that almost all Europe is of the christian persuasion, in opposition to the Pagans, Mahometans, and Jews, which at present maintain the contrary; but who will affirm, that only to profess the name of Christ, in opposition to these, will assure a man eternal felicity? Certainly the whole Popish hierarchy might be esteemed the saints of the Most High, provided salvation could be so easily obtained: even that corrupted church itself will not allow of such a proposition, seeing it excludes all from the kingdom of heaven, who are not of her community, notwithstanding they may profess the name of Jesus. As the world in general are divided into four grand denominations respecting religious sentiments, so they who bear the name of Christ are not without their parties. To enumerate the various sects who go under this character would be to little purpose, seeing but few do maintain a form of sound words. Some deny the proper divinity of the Prince of life and glory, others his sacrifice, whilst a third sort count his righteousness

righteousness only available to render the former
 meritorious. Waving therefore names and parties,
 we will suppose the gospel rendered effectual to
 many to beget a set of principles in their minds as
 consistent with itself as ever was professed; if such
 rest here can this profit? Suppose a man as high
 in the doctrines of grace as ever any yet attained,
 if he believe only in and not on Christ, what doth
 this argue in his favor? If he credit every truth
 relative to God's people both called and uncalled,
 can this save him? To hear what God hath pur-
 posed in their behalf, what he doth for them in
 time, and the great things he will certainly do for
 them in eternity, what warrant doth this afford
 me to believe on Christ, if the gospel give no fur-
 ther encouragement? What satisfaction can fallen
 angels enjoy in hearing of a redeemer provided
 for Adam's fallen offspring? Restrain the gospel
 call, and what hope is there left? For how doth
 it appear that we have any gospel at all, by which
 we may obtain the divine favor? If the law leave
 us after all its convictions, terrors, and thunder-
 ings, though awakened yet under its dominion,
 we differ only from our former condition just as a
 man in perishing circumstances and sensible of his
 state differs from another in the like danger who
 yet is insensible and secure. Despair only adds to
 our condemnation, it is productive of no virtue;
 consequently if the call under consideration be not
 indefinite,

indefinite, it must be the contrary, and so leaves us to perish in our misery. But supposing it to be definite and that I and many others are the persons on whom it calls, how did we attain that which so defines us? If it be answered neither by the law nor gospel, but by the Spirit of the Lord in a sovereign way unknown to us, we tracing the effects of this his sovereign operation conclude ourselves his elect people, on whom he calls; allowing this position what doth our faith amount to? Doth it amount to any thing but this, that because of these effects it is evident that Christ and all the blessings of redemption are ours: while these are discerned our faith, or rather conclusion is clean and strong, but if they should be obscured, we are to wait for a renewed evidence thereof. How the foregoing maxim can be proved from the sacred oracles is hard to say; on the contrary, if the gospel be the divine instrument by which a saving faith is produced, then faith is something more than a conclusion founded on imaginary marks and signs; or a bare assent to the truth of a set of religious principles how consistent soever they may be with the gospel of Christ, which assent will certainly profit us no more than Balaam's did, who could believe for others, but not for himself.

Secondly, The chief end and design of the gospel is, that men for themselves may embrace, lay hold

hold of, and depend on the mediator it reveals as the end of the law for righteousness, and by and through him expect the same grace and glory the Lord hath promised to his elect people.

Who they are that are called upon so to do hath been already shewn, even those who are at present under the law, and dead in trespasses and sins; to which call it hath been noticed no such persons will be obedient, until the convictions of the law have brought them to a despair of ever attaining life through a legal conformity. Wherefore let it be observed that

First, They are called to look on Christ crucified, finishing redemption by his death, as God's appointed way of salvation.

Secondly, As before characterized, viz. as having nothing to pay, they are to trust, confide, and assure themselves, that he finished the great work for them, because God inviteth sinners through him,

Thirdly, They are to confide, trust, and assure themselves that God will pardon, justify, and accept them freely, coming unto him through the finished redemption of his son.

Fourthly, They are, thus fiducially believing on Christ and God by him, to depend upon it that God will certainly bestow on them both grace and glory.

First,

First, Sinners, even the chief of sinners, are called upon to look on Christ crucified finishing redemption by his death, as God's appointed way of salvation. Most men who are the subjects of legal conviction, and are alarmed in their consciences, very soon conclude that Christ is the Lord's appointed way, but the great difficulty with such is, how they shall be entitled to come to God by this way: therefore they labor to the utmost of their ability to prepare, qualify, and render themselves meet for such an approach, taking the chief comfort and encouragement in their preparation and meetness; but when the Spirit of the Lord, through the law, hath shewn them the insufficiency of all such attempts, and by the gospel persuades the heart that they, and they only who have nothing to pay are welcome; their souls are immediately desirous in some measure to cast themselves upon the mercy of God through Christ Jesus. Our present business is not to treat of the operations of the divine Spirit on the hearts of sinners through the word of grace, but what the import of that word is, and to prove that our present proposition is that, which it inculcates. This will appear if we consult *Rom. iii. 25*, and *26*. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare I say,

at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth on Jesus." The call of the gospel on sinners is not to believe they are, but to believe in order that they may be saved. Therefore if it call on them to look on Christ crucified, as thereby finishing the work of redemption, and therein being God's appointed way for salvation, it also calls on them,

Secondly, As such to trust, confide, and assure themselves, that Christ finished the great work for them. The former proposition implies no less; if the latter be denied the former is rendered vain to the soul, which is in perishing circumstances, and is seeking for salvation. What is the complaint of such a person? Is it not that his sins are like mountains upon him, that the fierce wrath and displeasure of the Lord is ready to crush him, that he hath no righteousness, whereby to stand before an holy and just God with acceptance? What doth it avail to inform such a one, he ought to believe that Christ is the Lord's appointed way for sinners to be saved, and yet that he as a sinner hath no warrant so much as to attempt to trust or confide that Christ died for his iniquities, that he wrought out a perfect righteousness for him. Will not such a burdened and law-condemned sinner reply, to what purpose do you acquaint me that the righteousness and atonement of Christ, is

God's appointed way for the salvation of sinners, if I a sinner am not to labor, authorized by God's word, to trust and confide Christ, did all this for me? Do you think that rather than I should perish, Christ will come again from heaven to suffer? Or may I content myself with such a faith as dares not trust, my sins were laid upon him, that only credits the report of his being a savior to his elect? If I must content myself with the latter, alas! alas! I know of no marks or tokens, but those of the wrath and displeasure of a just and righteous God; and unless I can cleave unto this savior for myself, I must inevitably perish to all eternity. Again. As the gospel calls on sinners not only to look on Christ as God's way, but also to trust in him as a way for them; so also

Thirdly, Doth it call on them to confide, trust, and assure themselves, that God will pardon, justify, and accept them freely; coming unto him through the finished redemption of his son.

It may possibly be asked, is not this a chimera, a believing what may eventually appear to have no real existence? To which it may be replied, if the God of truth, holiness, justice, and mercy, doth call in his gospel, and a soul obeys that call, the Lord is engaged, that no disappointment shall follow such an obedience. Whatever the Lord does must be righteously done; the very supposition

tion

tion that the call, invitation and promise of the gospel, or whatever it may be denominated, being his, is a sufficient proof of its veracity and rectitude. It is to be considered not as speaking of sinners in general, neither as speaking to them collectively but indefinitely and individually. It admits not any one to reply, he is too guilty or too vile; nor doth it find any who can warrantably affirm, he is not elected; could such an instance be produced, that is the soul that can upon the principles of moral rectitude refuse to hearken to the voice of mercy. Every one who is favored by a kind Providence with the scriptures of truth, is not principally required to attend what concerns others, as a necessary means of his salvation, but what relates to himself, and as this becometh one, so doth it another that is alike favored: if a single individual could rationally object to the word of truth calling, because it is not manifest to him he is a chosen vessel, why might not another?—And why might not all do the same? And if so, how would Christ see of the travel of his soul?—'Tis by the obedience of the gospel, electing grace is evidenced to God's chosen seed. Doth not this appear from *Ephes.* i. 13, 14. "In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance,

until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." The proposition now considered relates to the end of faith. What would it signify to trust in Christ as God's way, and as his way for ourselves, unless we so did in order to some end? The very idea of a way implies as much. Consequently we are called by the divine voice to trust that God will pardon and accept us, we building our confidence on the foundation he himself hath laid; coming to him in the way of his own appointment: not that souls in whom at first grace may be, as the smoking flax and bruised reed, can do in point of degree, what the gospel calls on them to perform; that is a matter which at present relates not to our subject, nevertheless the voice of truth is still the same, whether men be obedient or not. The more we believe and are persuaded, the more we honor the divine veracity. Was God to deal with his people according to the worthiness, or rather unworthiness of their faith, they must perish for ever: but Oh what goodness! what mercy! what love! that despises not the dim eye, the trembling hand, neither the paralytic feet of his people's faith. For confirmation of what hath been said, attend we to Paul's words or rather the words of God by him, *Rom. iv. 20.* to the close, speaking of Abraham, it is said, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving

giving glory to God: and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." What the improvement is we may see by the following words:—"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Fourthly, They who are called to believe as aforementioned, are required to depend that God will certainly bestow on them both grace and glory.

"How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" are the words of an inspired apostle, *Rom. viii. 32.* who also affirms, *2 Cor. i. 20.* "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us:" by us who hold forth unto you, or unto others, a crucified savior, who hath both obeyed and died for sinners, even by the appointment of the divine Father, and in whom he is well pleased, in order for you and all who hear the gospel to believe and confide in; to this blessed end and purpose, even for the enjoyment of all that a God hath promised to bestow through him, of which you do not well to doubt

doubt and question : for all the promises in him are yea. Having finished these particulars, let us return to the last general head, viz.

Thirdly, No person is authorized to affirm he is of the number of those, whom Christ redeemed by his fulfilment of all righteousness, until he can prove to himself he hath believed thereunto.

This will serve for an answer to the objection before made, viz. "If the Lord was incarnate, obeyed, and died solely in the behalf of his elect people, how ought any but his chosen to believe he was incarnate, obeyed, and died for them." An heart confidence on the mediation of Christ founded on the gospel, considered as God's call to sinners, is quite of a different nature, from warrantably affirming either to ourselves or others, that Christ did die and obey for us. The one is built on the divine testimony in the gospel, through which the Holy Spirit generates faith in the hearts of his people, to take hold of, appropriate, and confide in the incarnation, righteousness and death of Christ, as God's appointed way of salvation ; and the other is bottomed on the perception of a faith so actuated, inclusive of all its sanctifying fruits and effects. The former is an obedience to the gospel call, the latter arises from a perspicuous evidence that we have obeyed it. But lest a shadow of absurdity should seem

to remain; let it be further noticed that no fallen son or daughter of Adam, convinced or unconvinced by the law, can trust, confide, or assure themselves in the former sense, notwithstanding the gospel call, but by the energy of the divine Spirit thro' it, which energy or power is the peculiar gift of God's elect, in order that they may be saved.— This doctrine the great apostle of the Gentiles evidently inculcates, *Ephes. ii. 8, 9*, and *10*. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained; that we should walk in them." Similar to which the master himself hath spoken, as may be seen *John vi. 44*. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." *Matt. xi. 27*. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Wherefore this power is, as before asserted, the peculiar office of the divine Spirit to impart, as many other passages of sacred writ affirm, particularly *John iii. 6, 8*.— Thus though it remain an incontrovertible truth that whoever comes to Christ must be animated so to do by the divine Spirit of all grace, or he will
 never

never believe on the Son of God, yet is not the gospel call useless and vain, because it is a rational call. Mankind in general are in condemned and perishing circumstances, whether they will believe it or no, because scripture hath so declared it, in which God hath also revealed a savior, and signified that he will pardon and forgive, and receive sinners to his favor through this savior, that they shall be blessed by him with all such gifts, as shall render them happy both in time and to eternity. — Howbeit if they will neither credit God's word of threatening nor promise, but on the contrary reject and despise it, give the preference to every idle amusement and concern; then until it can be proved (though men be not spiritually quickened) that they act rationally in so treating both law and gospel, the latter, viz: the gospel cannot be evinced to be useless and vain, though disobeyed; as is evident from Paul's declaration, *12 Cor. iii. 15; 16.* "For, says he, we are unto God a sweet favor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are a favor of death unto death; and to the other the favor of life unto life."

C H A P. VIII.

The Publication of the Gospel Call.

HAVING finished as proposed, viz. an inquiry into the nature of the gospel call, we shall come now to treat of the publication thereof.

That the sacred scriptures are sufficient of themselves in the hand of the divine Spirit, both for conviction and conversion, were the Lord pleased so to use them, is without question; but so the Lord hath not always determined. On the contrary it seemed good unto him primarily to give unto the church, first apostles and prophets, afterwards evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, *Ephes.* iv. 8, 11, 12. 'Tis the appointment of God that in this present state men should be employed in various occupations for the temporal benefit of themselves and one another, and it is their duty in their respective callings to glorify him as the ultimate end of all. As therefore the far greater part of mankind are daily to attend secular affairs, the Lord hath also ordained from the beginning the rest to meditate, study, explain, and inculcate

his truths, for which last mentioned purpose he hath appointed and enjoined public meetings and assemblies periodically to be attended, wherein and at which times he will socially be waited on and worshipped. This divine ordination is attended with innumerable benefits of a spiritual nature, without which, through the apostacy of Adam and original depravity, mankind would have sunk into absolute and down right atheism. But this divine purpose of social worship hath taken effect through the whole series of time accompanied by an unremitted succession of ecclesiastic officers for the ends before signified: the chief of which all will readily allow (who are divinely taught) to be divine instruction through a gospel ministry, which ministry consists of two parts especially, viz. the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the perfecting and edifying of saints. The former of which I shall only attend to, and consider the office of an evangelist with respect to sinners in a two fold relation.

First, As a preacher of the law.

Secondly, Of the gospel.

First, As a preacher of the law. To preach the law appears not very suitable to the character of a gospel minister, yet it is necessary in order that men who are in the utmost danger of perishing everlastingly,

everlastingly, may be apprized of the jeopardy they are in. The necessity of this does not arise so much from the vileness of their state, and their unworthiness to receive the gospel of glad tidings, as their entire indisposition to attend unto the divine and gracious message: they see no need thereof, they are at ease, and regard it not; when alarmed the ministry of the law is further necessary to convince them of the insufficiency of all the false refuges, to which in this circumstance they are inclinable to fly unto.

Secondly, The office of an evangelist consists chiefly and principally in promulgating the gospel declaration.

How this should be published, the nature of the gospel itself is a directory. That it be with perspicuity the necessity thereof will appear, inasmuch as men in general are apt to err about it. The scriptures are not plain and obvious at first view, but to those to whom the Spirit of the Lord will so render them; which he is not pleased in general to do, but expects that much diligence, prayer, and meditation should be used, and frequently that one person should inquire of another, concerning the things which relate to their eternal welfare, in which duties he is pleased to open their understandings. The scriptures are only from themselves capable of being explained, con-

sequently they whose business it is to labor in the word and doctrine, are best qualified to deliver their import and meaning to others; besides they who are truly called are called by God to their sacred function, and consequently are in a more peculiar degree under the divine influence, and are entrusted with more talents than the private christian. Let this therefore suffice touching this branch of our inquiry, and proceed we in the last and succeeding chapter to consider (as proposed) the instrumentality of the gospel in subservience to the operations of the divine Spirit in the effectual calling of sinners to a state of grace.

C H A P. IX.

The Instrumentality of the Gospel in effectual Calling.

WERE not the call of the gospel at any time, attended with power to the hearts of dead sinners, they would necessarily remain in a state of spiritual death to eternity. As the law without the Spirit of God is insufficient to convince of sin the hardened offender, so is the gospel of truth incapable to convert the natural heart without the almighty operation of that divine agent. 'Tis irrational to suppose, as hath been heretofore proved,

proved,

proved, that the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity, who is Lord and sovereign of the divine law will ever justify or condemn those who are under it, but according as they are thereby found: with equal propriety may it be affirmed, that they who are capable of the use of their rational faculties, he will never convert but by his gospel; what may falsely go under that name to suppose he can or will own to saving purposes, is both horrid and blasphemous. That he may over-rule error to the manifestation of the truth, is no more to be denied, than by the permission of sin he may eventually deliver from all sin. Many a saint when in a natural state has been first awakened to a deep consideration of themselves, by means of some extraordinary iniquity they have been suffered to commit; also the truths of the gospel have been investigated with uncommon assiduity, by means of the errors that have been broached concerning it. If we apprehend error for truth either in reading or hearing, our faith is formed accordingly, and therefore cannot be the faith of God's elect. Though the people of God know not the whole of gospel truths, yet there ever will be an harmony between the essentials thereof and their faith. These things being premised, it will not be amiss to inquire

First, Whether the divine Spirit doth effectually call men without the dispensation of the gospel.

Secondly,

Secondly, If it be not the instrument of begetting faith in the heart through the Spirit.

Thirdly, If it be not the nature of true and saving faith to perceive the gospel as it sets forth the way to God; and to embrace it.

Fourthly, Whether the perceptive and fiducial properties of faith be not one before another in order, though not in time.

Fifthly, If true love be not the immediate fruit and effect of Christ perceived and embraced by faith, through the gospel; godly sorrow and true repentance the instantaneous productions of love.

Sixthly, Whether the subject of this special grace may not be unable to conclude, he is a real partaker of it.

First, It is demanded whether the divine Spirit doth effectually call men without the gospel.

They who affirm the gospel revelation is absolutely necessary to salvation, have by the generality of mankind been always esteemed as persons of very uncharitable sentiments. This censure certainly arises from the imaginary and delusive conclusion, that natural men are apt to draw, viz. that by their works they must be saved: Indeed if their judgment herein can be supported by the unerring

unerring standard of truth, they then do well to infer that where the scriptures are not known, those who are ignorant of redemption by Christ may do well by an upright conformity to the dictates of a natural conscience : howbeit on this principle they must prove that the Supreme Governor of the universe will, as an absolute God, pardon not only the sins of infirmity, but also the original sin of all such, seeing they are without a sacrifice : but the sacred word instead of being a prop to, flatly discountenances such vain conclusions. In one place it affirms, *Rom.* iii. 20. " By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in God's sight ; " and in another, viz. *Prov.* xxix. 18. " Where there is no vision the people perish. " The natural heart determines for God according to its preconceptions of him. Men in general are of opinion, that if their fellow creatures act according to the best of their knowledge and power, God is obliged to accept them. This is their conduct toward their children, and those who are under their authority, and can you suppose say they that God is less merciful ? Upon these principles to what lengths do men extend his mercy, and yet rightly apprehended how do they contract it ? Were they as solicitous to secure the honors of his justice and holiness, they would not be so ready to censure them who maintain the necessity of gospel revelation, but framing

ing a deity according to their own liking, whom they represent to themselves neither infinite in justice nor mercy; they are irritated to the last degree (like to the proud king of Babylon) against all those who will not fall down and worship the image they themselves have set up. Others there are who acknowledging the necessity of the revelation of Christ, yet unwilling to condemn the heathen destitute of the gospel, think that the Lord the Spirit without the word discovers him to their hearts. Certainly this the Lord can and may, but that he doth or will do, his word appears rather to deny than maintain. If not, what construction can we put on the scriptures just now quoted, as well as on the following passages?—*Rom. x. 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17.* “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This declaration from the lip of truth leaves the foregoing

going sentiment without any foundation, which if established would bring down our Lord's threatening *Rev. ii. 5.* to a meer nothing. But that the gospel must be discovered to sinners, either ordinarily or extraordinarily, ere they can obtain the divine favor and be saved, is without doubt. The Church of England sticks not to anathematize all those who deny it. *Apt. 18.* "They also are to be had accursed, that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ where by men must be saved." If the matter stand thus, how important the gospel! No wonder satan so rages at it. Nothing meets with so much opposition in the world as the word of the Lord's grace. Evil angels withstand it, knowing its excellence, being fully assured that it tends above all things to the demolition of their authority, and that wherever it comes it shakes the kingdom of their prince even to the foundation. What doth our Lord himself say on this occasion? *Luke x. 18.* "And he said unto them, I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven." But how doth the enemy of souls oppose it? First he will reject the very name of Christ by exciting hatred in those under his power. Is not this the melancholy case

of the Pagan, Mahometan, and Jewish world?—He stirs them up to be enemies to their own salvation. If any individuals among them should be led to embrace even but the name of Christ, much more his scripture, what opposition from their brethren immediately ensues! Abuse too virulent, and treatment too cruel, cannot be devised, that in their judgment they think such deserve not. In the christian world the enemy acts another part; if he cannot expel the name of gospel, he will pervert the thing; this was the case in Paul's time. What doth that great apostle say on that occasion? What his words are may be seen *Gal.* i. 6, 7, 8, and 9. "I marvel, that ye are so soon removed from him, that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."—Let us stop here and ask this question, hath not the Arian, Sabellian, Papist, Socinian, Arminian, &c. &c. perverted the gospel of Christ? They all pretend to teach and preach it, but must we believe what they deliver to be pure gospel, because they say so? The name of gospel will not save us. Whatever appellations men may give to things, unless they be rightly named, they are not the things thereby represented. Therefore this is a very subtle device of satan. Do not men at present for the most part turn the law into gospel,

gospel, and on the contrary the gospel into law? And those who come nearer the truth, do they not inculcate some conformity to the law as a step to Christ? Every where; and in every one is there a war against the gospel revelation and call, even the hearts of God's people, in proportion to the actings of the old principle within them are fighting against it; but let us see of what importance the inspired penman regards this point? He adds, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."—A matter of consequence indeed, that could draw from the pen of a man, whose heart was so replete with divine philanthropy, as it appears his was! But to shew that the subject he had now in hand was to the utmost degree interesting and important, he subjoins "As was said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." No matter whether professed brethren, or open enemies, Paul regarded it not, he condemned them all, in this exceeding momentous and weighty concern. Seeing then that a right display of the grace of the gospel, and a warrantable call to the enjoyment of that grace, are set forth in far more different points of view than any other subject, it behoveth us to be careful what apprehension we entertain thereof, and

to be solicitous that our conception of this matter be agreeable to the mind and will of God. For although it be exceeding difficult to form a right judgment herein, unless we religiously and attentively adhere to the Lord and what he declares, yet it seems from what hath been observed in the course of this inquiry, that we shall not err, if we follow this rule, viz. to regard the blessings of grace as freely held forth to sinners not only as dead in sin, but wholly under the condemnation of the law, to be accepted by such through that mediation only, whereby God is declared to be infinite both in justice and mercy; and also not only to look on these benefits as lawful so to be received, but to be concerned with an heart confidence to embrace them accordingly, by virtue of and in obedience to that call, which is both indefinite and free, concluding that the gospel alone is a sinner's only proper title to Christ, and Christ received by faith, is his sole title to grace and glory. The next particular to be investigated is

Secondly, Whether the gospel call be not the instrument in the hand of the divine Spirit of begetting faith in the hearts of God's people.

That it does not in all who hear it, is not owing to any limitation in the gospel, but must be attributed to the good pleasure of him alone, who can only render it effectual. That it is the instrumental

mental means of faith, is clear from a passage lately cited, viz. *Rom. x. 17.* which passage is exemplified by the apostle's declaration to the Thessalonians, first epistle, chapter i. 5. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Hence it is apparent the inspired writer intended, a discovery of what entertainment the Thessalonians gave the gospel, on its being first promulgated amongst them. "For yourselves brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain," are his words, chap. ii. 1. If the gospel call is denied to be of this use, how shall we understand many metaphorical expressions we find in sacred writ? Of this sort is *John xii. 38, 39, 40.* "Lord who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart and be converted, and I should heal them." Likewise *Matt. xi. 15.* "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." All which portions of holy scripture evidently denote, that without the gospel men can neither see nor hear what is absolutely necessary to their salvation, and though highly privileged therewith, unless the Lord the Spirit open thereby their understandings, they neither
see

see nor hear it spiritually to the embracing thereof, and to the building all their hopes and expectations on it, for deliverance from the miserable circumstances in which they are through sin and the fall. A disordered man neither sees nor hears aright the prescriptions of an infallible physician, if he be totally unaffected with his advice and counsel; but he that thankfully and earnestly embraces it, sees so as to perceive, and hears as to understand the propriety and utility of what is prescribed him. Our Lord's words *John viii. 32.* are not foreign from our present inquiry, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Do not these words evidently imply that the truth is the instrument, and yet without a powerful hand to use it, it is of no avail? Is not the import of these words also, that, that divine agent who effects a spiritual freedom will not afford it, but by the truth? If the arguments now used and scriptures adduced are not sufficiently conclusive to prove our proposition, will not the testimony of the apostle James, which before we had occasion to cite determine the matter? *James i. 18.* "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth."—Seeing therefore that the gospel is of so great utility, without which nothing of a saving nature is effected in persons capable of mental reflection, how ought we to prize, esteem, weigh, consider, ponder and pray over it? Should it not be regarded

garded by us as inestimable, infinitely to be preferred to all the little concerns of a temporal kind? Ought we not to banish at the remotest distance the notion some have embraced, that it being capable of abuse, it concerns us little to pay any strict attention to it, but follow after love, the chief object? Could true love be obtained otherwise than by the gospel, the conclusion would not be impertinent; but if it be the only channel, by which this grace is derived, how dangerous the conclusion! Therefore let us not reject truth, much more gospel truth, but rather pray we the God of all grace, mercy and love, that it may be the power of God unto our souls, not only for our conversion, but also for our edification and establishment.

Thirdly, Let us examine if it be not the essential property of true faith to perceive and embrace the gospel, as it sets forth the way to God, for acceptance and salvation.

This position strikes us with no small concern. It demands at first view the utmost attention and scrutiny: to err here is not to mistake in a trivial matter, but in that which is of the greatest moment. It is not like the circumstantial of religion, but it seems to relate to religion itself, even to that which properly deserves the name and to be the very essence thereof. Were there many ways
whereby



whereby we might approach God with acceptance, and through which he communicates his grace in time, and perfects that grace at last in glory, it would even then behove us to know and be assured we were walking if not in one, yet in another of those ways : but if the way be but one, and it is possible we may fatally err in respect to it, to use all means both to know and how to attain thereto, must be allowed to be highly necessary and requisite. It is obvious, that at the commencement of the gospel dispensation the disciples of our Lord were ignorant of many things, which at present are judged of great moment : they knew not the nature of Christ's kingdom, and instead of looking for an heavenly, they were expecting an earthly one. Little did they think their master was to be so treated, as the event manifested, wherefore Peter could chide our Lord himself, even for hinting at the treatment he must necessarily undergo. However we dare not question, but the disciples were even then the subjects of regenerating grace, for though they did not believe as circumstantially in the Savior of mankind, as they did after his resurrection and ascension, yet they did then believe and trust in him as the Messiah, the sent, yea the Son of God, and Savior of the world : for though they were ignorant in what manner he was to prove himself their deliverer, yet without doubt their whole dependence was on, and

and expectation from him only. What denominates the faith of any man true or false, effectual or ineffectual to salvation, is a point of great importance to determine, and ought to be handled with great caution and fear, seeing in this state the best are subject to much spiritual darkness and obscurity, nevertheless it may be safely concluded, that as a man beholdeth the gospel so is his faith. If he conceives of it as a new law, his faith is legal. If he regards Christ as the way to God for acceptance and salvation, only for those who have rendered themselves if not worthy yet meet to walk in this way, how doth it appear he hath a true confidence? If he views God's appointed way only for such who both are and know themselves to be saints, and this hath ever been his apprehensions, how is it manifest he hath believed on him that justifieth the ungodly? And what necessity can he ever have to believe in Christ for justification? For if conscious he is a saint, he must know he is justified already; and if ignorant thereof he hath no warrant to believe for that purpose. Although the disciples before Christ's death believed in him alone for salvation, but were ignorant in what way it was to be effected; now the salvation is finished doth it not become absolutely necessary to be informed both of the nature thereof, and who the persons are that are warranted to embrace it, in order that we may

not build our confidence but on truth? What things therefore ought now to be discussed are the following, viz.

First, Whether the Lord did not chiefly and primarily propose his own glory, viz. a revelation of his infinite justice and mercy in the redemption of sinners by Christ Jesus.

Secondly, If it be not his good pleasure that true faith should so honor him.

Thirdly, Let us inquire whether this can be done, if the gospel call or warrant be limited.

First, Did not the Lord chiefly and primarily propose his own glory, viz. a revelation of his infinite justice and mercy in the redemption of Christ for sinners?

To deny that he did is to make the creator subject to the creature, and to think of the infinite Jehovah more unbecomingly than of one of our own species who is capable of the exercise of his rational faculties: is not that man accounted the wisest, who adapts his knowledge to the best ends? Who is there that undertakes any affair of importance without proposing to himself an end worthy of such an enterprize? Are we tolerated to expect such wisdom from men, nay is not every one tenacious of this character? And shall we rob the

the Lord of this essential attribute? Whatever the infinite Jehovah doth must be infinite wisdom; and what more suitable to be proposed thereby, than a display of the divine perfections? Is there any greater than he? Are not all things created by him, animate or inanimate, rational or irrational? We hear an inspired writer cry out, *Psalms* civ. 24. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all." But how this wisdom is manifested the apostle Paul declares, *Rom.* i. 20. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."—

If the Lord intended a display of his infinite goodness and power in creation, shall we take from him his prerogative in the further discovery of himself in redemption? Surely the unlimited mercy of God never could have been manifested, were souls to have remained for ever under the power of law and justice; and justice itself doth not appear so grand and boundless, but as in harmony with infinite mercy through the redemption of our Immanuel. What were Paul's sentiments on this matter, or rather what doth he by the Holy Ghost say concerning this? *Ephes.* i. 7, 8, his declaration is, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," which expres-

sion we may look on as tantamount to the riches of his mercy, seeing the miserable are the objects of this grace. He adds, "Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence," without doubt all that wisdom and prudence worthy of Jehovah; which passage if compared with *Rom. iii. 26.* will appear plain and intelligible, "To declare I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Secondly, Is it not the divine purpose, that true faith should honor the Lord as a God of infinite justice and mercy in the redemption of sinners by Christ?

That it is *Rom. iii. 27.* sufficiently proves, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." *Dr. Gill* on this last clause expounds as follows, viz.—"The word law here answers to "the Hebrew word *Torah*, which signifies any "doctrine or instruction, and oftentimes the doctrine of the gospel, as in *Isaiah ii. 3.* and chap. "xlii. 4. and here particularly the doctrine of a "sinner's justification by faith in the righteousness "of Christ, according to which doctrine the most "unlikely persons are justified, even ungodly "persons, the worst and vilest of sinners; and "that without any consideration of works, by
" faith

“ faith only, which is freely given them, and by
 “ faith in Christ’s righteousness only : so that
 “ there is not the least room for boasting in the
 “ creature, but all their boasting is in Christ,
 “ who is made unto them righteousness, and by
 “ whom they are justified.” Compare this scrip-
 ture with *Rom.* iv. 20. to the close, also with the
1 Cor. i. 30; and 31. and it will appear that as the
 redemption of Christ was calculated to glorify God,
 and lay the creature in the dust, so faith must re-
 ceive it, and ever harmonize with the gospel in
 relation to acceptance, which faith is not a specu-
 lative principle only, but rather what it sees
 clearly it embraces strongly ; both which peculiar
 properties thereof may be evinced from *Rom.* x.
 8, 10. “ The word is nigh thee, even in thy
 mouth, and in thy heart : that is the word of faith
 which we preach.” Here the apostle calls the gospel
 the word of faith, whereby the first property is obvi-
 ous, and in the following words the latter is dis-
 covered : “ For with the heart man believeth unto
 righteousness.” Proceed we now to the next
 particular, and inquire

Thirdly, If the gospel call or warrant be limited,
 is it possible to honor God (as aforementioned) by
 believing? viz. as a God of infinite justice and
 mercy.

The call of the gospel has been already shewn
 to

to be the call of God, and also that it is an universal, free, undeserved, merciful, and righteous call. The redemption of Christ hath been evinced to be primarily intended for the manifestation of the harmony of the divine attributes of justice and mercy in the salvation of sinners; that faith which embraces the redemption tends to the same end, for which so great a work was compleated; and finally that the gospel, through the Spirit, produces an effectual faith. If faith correspond not with the object it is to embrace with relation to the grand end and design for which the latter was provided, viz. the glory of God, it is beyond contradiction a corrupt faith, not the confidence of the Lord's elect, which confidence the divine Spirit is pleased only by the gospel to impart, therefore the call thereof must be as before described, viz. an universal, free, undeserved, merciful, and righteous call, otherwise it is not calculated to produce such a faith. But on the contrary if it be not universal, it cannot be free, as hath been largely proved; and if not free, to evince it undeserved and merciful will be exceeding difficult, unless the Lord's elect people were manifested to be so either to themselves or others without the gospel, or before they were called thereby: if their election be not thus manifested, they cannot believe as the chief of sinners, but as contradistinguished from others by some goodness which is peculiar

petuliar to them, of which they must be also conscious, in order to be authorised and warranted to believe. This at once overturns the whole gospel system, and renders the covenant of grace effectual, in consequence of some good thing the creature performs or that dwells in the elect hypothetically circumstanced in opposition to others; but by such a faith how is the creature shewn to be entirely under the law of condemnation and to be wholly flesh? How is he declared to be such a miserable object, that infinite mercy is glorified in his salvation? By such a confidence how doth the exceeding riches of divine grace appear? Or how can the restitude of the gospel call be evidenced, that calls on him as the chief of sinners, when there are millions worse than himself, in consequence of the want of those prerequisites, which he enjoys? What did the apostle intend in *Gal. iii. 1*. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?" Doth he not herein plainly signify that many are called by the outward call of the gospel, to whom it is not made effectual by the Spirit? If not, why does he say, chap. iv. 11. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." But if the gospel call be to all, then they who believe and embrace the mediator whom it sets forth, and all new covenant blessings

blessings in him, as condemned, perishing, helpless, and miserable creatures in themselves, they do so to the glory of God's infinite justice and holiness, also to the honor of his unbounded love, grace and mercy, and thereby set to their seal that he is the God of truth and faithfulness. Having treated already the gospel message more at large, we will proceed to the next general head, and inquire

Fourthly, Whether the perceptive and fiducial properties of faith be not one before the other in point of order, though not of time ?

If not in point of order, how is the gospel revelation a means ? If these properties are not the immediate effect one of the other, how is the gospel revelation and call an effectual means ?

First, If the perceptive and fiducial properties of faith be not one before the other in point of order, how is the gospel revelation a means of this grace ?

To perceive is an act of the understanding.— To trust is an act of the will. To confide without perception either of the sufficiency of the object to preserve us, or that it is lawful to trust in it, is inconsistent with the very principles of a rational soul. This is asserted against those who would affirm the will of man to be independent of his understanding. Experience evidences that the will

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is often very unduly and improperly exerted, yet will it not follow that such an exertion is not the effect of choice. Though the volitions put forth by men in general may not arise from an elaborate inquiry into the rule of their conduct, yet are they the result of their understandings, springing either from misconception or doubtfulness, especially when it happens much trouble is required rightly to determine, yet nevertheless they may be said to originate from a supposed eligibility of one thing in preference to another. Wherefore by what is now observed concerning the perception of men, is not intended that the acts of the will and every act of trust are always the result of that perception which properly deserves the name, but for the most part rather of that which is but imaginary and delusive, yet to determine the mind it must be either the one or the other, or where two propositions are set before us to be the rule of our choice, that which appears most perspicuous and profitable will produce it. No man wills any thing without some conclusion in the understanding either true or false, as the source thereof, and certainly at that time under the notion of good, however evil it might afterwards be perceived to be. Disallow of this and what is the will of man any more than a blind necessity and inclination, no better than the mariner's needle inclining to the northern pole, or a stone projected

into the air tending to the centre of our globe?— If this be the case with respect to the human will, who does not see that where confidence is exerted it must arise from a persuasion or conclusion previous to it? A man trusts not his substance into the hands of another, without being persuaded that he is a man both of wealth and probity with whom he leaves it. Who puts his life into the hands of a physician, unless he be persuaded of his skill and honor? If this be the case in temporals, certainly it is or ought to be much more so in spirituals. What gives occasion to the various religions in the world? Do they not all originate from the different conclusions among men with relation to their ground of trust? Surely every man supposes that what he confides in, is not only a proper object, but that it is free for him to trust therein for that end he proposes to himself: deny the latter and what avails the former? Is a person in famishing circumstances benefited by the most sumptuous entertainment, if he be not permitted to partake thereof? Or a man condemned with others to die profited by a royal grant of pardon, if he be not included in it? Certainly not.— Therefore it is conclusive that the perceptive property of faith, through the gospel revelation and call, must be prior in point of order to the trust or confidence of faith. However let us consider what authority the scriptures afford for such a conclusion.

a conclusion. The first passage apposite is our Lord's own declaration, *John* xvii. 3. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Again. Our Lord's petition, verse 17. "Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth." Which word we may well suppose intends the word of the gospel. But it may be asked, may not this knowledge be unattended with that trust and confidence which denominates a man a true believer ? Certainly it cannot ; for the knowledge here mentioned is the effectual teaching of the divine Spirit through the word, or gospel revelation or call, brought home to the understanding mentioned by St. Paul, *2 Cor.* iv. 3, 4, 5, 6. wherein he affirms that they who are never acquainted therewith must unavoidably perish, and on the contrary they into whose hearts it hath shined must certainly be in a state of salvation.—

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost : in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in

the face of Jesus Christ." As the words of the apostle here cited denote a special acquaintance with the gospel, they must also denote the universal and gracious call thereof; otherwise it would never have shined into their hearts, for the glory of God is as much displayed in communicating gospel grace as in providing it. If not so it would be difficult to assign a reason why this great apostle of the Gentiles should be so zealous against those who pervert the gospel of Christ, as appears by *Gal. i. 6.* to the 11th verse, also chap. *ii. 13.* to the close. How is it made evident that we are taught of the Spirit through the gospel, if we have no warrant to embrace it for ourselves, nay if we be not divinely instructed and persuaded that it is provided for sinners, and that therefore as such we are not only permitted but commanded to trust therein for our own salvation? This doctrine the same apostle inculcates, *Rom. iii. 28.* "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Also *Tim. i. 15, 16.* "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." From all which it appears that both the gospel and the call thereof must be

be perceived by the power of the divine Spirit in the heart, ere there can be any trust and confidence therein.

Secondly, If the trust of faith do not immediately succeed the sight thereof, how is the gospel revelation and call an effectual means?

Can we suppose these are possibly to be divided so as that it might warrantably be affirmed, that he who is taught by the Spirit of the Lord through the gospel, in an especial and saving manner, hath no trust therein? His being so enlightened by the scriptures of truth evinces that he is passed from death unto life, yet if he hath no affiance and special confidence, the same divine oracles pronounce him under condemnation. That the gospel must shine into the heart ere it be properly enlightened, and when it so doth that there salvation is begun, hath been proved already; but if this light do not immediately beget a special reliance, dependence, trust and confidence, how doth it appear that the man's state is altered? Is he not still under the law, under the wrath and displeasure of God? Need he not some other instrument or means, whereby he may become the subject of this trust? For if it be allowed he is specially illuminated, and yet without this essential property of true faith, by what way shall he ever attain it, seeing the gospel can do no more for him? But if the
apostle

apostle affirm that it is the power of God unto salvation, *Rom. i. 16.* it is then evident that the fiducial immediately succeeds the perceptive property of this grace, agreeable to the Psalmist's words, *Psal. ix. 10. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee.* As also to what our Lord says, *John vi. 45. Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* Therefore he that sensible of his misery and danger in a legal state, hath a discovery by the Spirit through the word of truth of the person, atonement, and righteousness of Christ, as the only foundation of acceptance with an infinitely holy, just, and righteous God, and that it is the good pleasure, yea command of God to all, even the chief of sinners, to come unto him in this way, and that he hath promised pardon, grace, and glory through it; that soul no more nor even so much hesitates as not in reality to come, than one who is drowning deliberates whether he shall accept of that offered deliverance which he knows is sufficient to save him from perishing. Our next inquiry is

Fifthly, Whether true love be not the immediate fruit and effect of Christ perceived and embraced by faith: godly sorrow and true repentance the instantaneous production of love.

An author of no small repute expresses himself on this subject in such language as few real children

dren of God can understand or comprehend.—
 His words are as follow:—“ Some say, that it is
 “ impossible for any man to have any love to God,
 “ or any other being, but that love to himself
 “ must be the foundation of it. They argue, that
 “ whoever loves God and so desires his glory or
 “ the enjoyment of him, desires these things as
 “ his own happiness; and so they say it is from
 “ self love, or a desire of his own happiness, that
 “ he desires God should be glorified, and desires
 “ to enjoy his glorious perfections.” Here we
 may observe, that before faith takes place in the
 heart, ’tis impossible that love can rise higher in
 its aim in any breast, than what hath now been no-
 ticed by this author as the sentiment of others;
 on the contrary, to suppose that a more exalted
 kind of love to God, and Jesus Christ, springs
 from a view of “ the divine excellency and glory,
 “ both of one and the other, and of the word,
 “ the works, and ways of God, &c.” to the pre-
 clusion of “ any supposed interest, that he the
 subject of such a view, shall receive from them,”
 is to separate the confidential property of faith
 from its perceptive, and to substitute a supposed
 super-eminent love, as the ground of faith’s affi-
 ance, instead of the universal, free, and unde-
 served call of the gospel; which call being also
 essential to a saving perception, the whole is anni-
 hilated both faith and love also, and a contempla-
 tion

tion of the divine excellence is placed in its room, which will never beget that love, which the author asserts arises solely therefrom. For proof of this conclusion, consult *John* vi. 55. *Rom.* xiv. 23. *Acts* xv. 9. *1 Tim.* i. 5. *Heb.* ix. 14. *Gal.* ii. 21. He still adds, "It is unreasonable to think otherwise than that the first foundation of a true love to God, is that whereby he is in himself lovely, or that supreme loveliness of his nature. This is certainly what makes him chiefly amiable.— God's nature is infinitely excellent, yea it is infinite beauty, brightness, and glory itself. But how can that be true love of this excellent nature, which is not built on the foundation of its true loveliness? They whose affection to God is founded first on its profitableness to them, their affection begins at the wrong end, they regard God only for the utmost limit of the stream of divine good where it touches them and reaches their interest." This passage seems to inculcate that the Lord may, yea must be viewed as an object of love, ere he be viewed as an object of trust. What saith the word of God concerning this matter, *Rom.* vii. 4, 6. "Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another," to what purpose? "That we should bring forth fruit unto God." What fruit? Doubtless the fruit of love. If the author had placed love
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where the apostle doth, he certainly would have been more intelligible, and perhaps more profitable. Again, verse 6. "But now we are delivered from the law." How? Was the apostle delivered only from his mistaken speculations, which he had changed for more exalted ones? Or was it a real deliverance by an ingrafture into Christ through the gospel by the Spirit? "That being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter:" that is, "From new principles and motives, and to new ends, with all freedom and delight in our souls, as those that are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and in a new life and conversation, all spiritual, holy, and heavenly, by the assistance of the Spirit of God." (See *Dr. Guyse* on the place.) Here it appears love takes its proper station; but when it assumes a superiority which becomes it not, an enemy more dangerous cannot be found, as the apostle very suitably observes, *Gal. v. 4. Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.* Instead therefore of loving the Lord to trust in him, let us behold him not only in the gospel as a Savior, but in the free publication of the gospel set forth for our salvation, which if so beheld what effect thereof will immediately be, let an inspired writer testify. *2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all with open face, behold-*

ing as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This divine testimony plainly evinces the truth of our proposition, viz. that true love is the immediate fruit and effect of Christ perceived and embraced by faith.— This is a maxim certain and evident, how otherwise can the scriptures be reconciled? John our Lord's forerunner acquaints us, *John iii. 36. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life.*— Compare this with what Paul denounces, *1 Cor. xvi. 22. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha.* Whence it appears, that if a man could be considered at any time as the subject of true and gospel faith, and yet not of love, that person would at the same instant be the subject of a blessed and a cursed state. Wherefore as the word of God is true, and the scriptures cannot be broken, love to God and Christ must be the immediate fruit and effect of faith, and not prior to or simply a concomitant of it. With relation to the additional testimonies of a gracious state, viz. godly sorrow and repentance, what can be said of them but that they spring instantaneously from a genuine love? It is not possible to conceive of them otherwise. If we have no love to God, we cannot grieve that we have offended him, and true grief has no existence where there is no desire of amendment. A newness of life will
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be more or less the immediate effect of this sorrow. Faith therefore as before described with love, godly sorrow, and repentance, not as links unconnected, but as a golden chain, immediately exist together, by the gospel, through the Spirit, which might be noticed concerning all other graces did the subject call for it. But to shew this sentiment is not singular, let us reflect what were the views of our English reformers and martyrs on this head. Article the 12th of the Church of England, "Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, inasmuch that by them a lively faith may be evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit." What therefore now remains is to notice, that we are not to apprehend that when the divine Spirit shines into our hearts by his gospel that our wills are moved to embrace the salvation displayed, to love the Lord in sincerity, or that we are the subjects of godly sorrow and repentance independent of him; no, but that this is the manner of his divine operations on the souls of his people, to comprehend the nature of which is far beyond the line of our scanty conception. It rather concerns us to experience a daily increase of his almighty

and efficacious grace, to his glory and our spiritual prosperity. What things have been observed in the foregoing inquiry, the motive for so doing may evidently appear to be an elucidation both of the nature and necessity of the gospel call to sinners, in order to effectual calling. Therefore where special faith and other graces have been treated, their order and manner of operation have been principally regarded: they themselves not considered as evidenced by the natural actions of their subject, whether internal or external, but rather according to their proper nature independent of the clog of a sinful and corrupt principle. Wherefore seeing every subject of special grace in this present world is, and will remain to be till the dissolution of the union of soul and body, a subject of the body of sin and death also; therefore the thoughts, conceptions, inclinations, aims, affections, words and actions of such must necessarily be the product not of grace only, but also of corruption; which grand principles in every saint, as they are diametrically opposite in their nature, so are they ever militating against and striving with each other for the mastery and dominion: the former by the divine Spirit maintained, increased, and at last perfected in its operations and influenced through the truth, by or in the way of all God's appointed means, as hearing and reading the word, meditation and prayer, christian fellowship

ship and conference and the like; and the other excited and stirred up by satan's temptations, the allurements and menaces of the world, and the evils to which the Lord's people are subject in this present state. Therefore

Sixthly and lastly, Let us examine, whether every subject of true grace is assured of the time he was delivered from a state of nature.

When a son or daughter of Adam becomes through rich mercy a trophy of almighty power and goodness, and remains no longer under the dominion of sin, satan, or the world, such persons cannot be esteemed but in a blessed state. Nevertheless so far are they themselves from such a conclusion in their own favor that it frequently happens they judge themselves ten-fold more the children of wrath, than they were ere they thought on the concerns of their souls. This unwarrantable supposition may arise from the very deep work of legal conviction, that they have been and still are the subjects of, aggravated not a little by the violent, impetuous, and incessant assaults of satan, who endeavors at such a season if possible to drive them into total and absolute despair of divine mercy: in order to obtain his end he excites and stirs up as much as he can, both the self-righteousness and unbelief of the heart, which now work in a different manner than heretofore. For
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whereas the truth was then utterly discarded, and some false foundations laid as the ground of confidence; now Christ as the only hope of sinners is discovered, which the soul breathes and longs after, in opposition to the self-righteous workings which it feels, yet at the same time the man reckons his breathings of no moment, and from a sense of his own vileness, and the temptations he feels and experiences, which through ignorance he is apt to charge on himself, unbelief will not suffer him to infer that he is in a state of divine favor, yet he is not capable of silencing his prayers and cries to the Lord for acceptance, and for some token of his special grace and mercy. What the Lord Jesus Christ hath both done and suffered is a great mystery of grace without, so are the operations of the divine Spirit, through the gospel, alike mysterious within God's people; wherefore to describe the smallest degree of true grace, as also to point out to what lengths a true saint may backslide, are both beyond the scope of the human understanding. However in answer to our present inquiry, let it be observed that the first views of the soul that are of a saving nature are not of objects within, but without it, and these the man may then see so dimly, that though he truly beholds and perceives them, and is a subject of a gracious change in consequence thereof, yet through the mighty power of unbelief, heart corruption, and
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fatan's temptations, he may be far from enjoying any assurance that he is a true believer. He is truly taught that Christ is the only way to the Father, and that it is his will, sinners, yea the chief of sinners, should come unto him by this way, yet will the legality and unbelief of his heart, backed by the temptations of satan, and corrupt doctrine of men, make a very strong opposition to it, and endeavor to turn him from the truth if possible. Wherefore the grace of faith in its beginning, by our reformers from Popery, was usually compared to a grain of mustard seed, by others it hath been likened to a spark in the mighty ocean, as also to a grain of pure gold mixed with much rubbish, likewise to a live coal covered with ashes; all which similitudes may with propriety be granted, seeing the scriptures likens it to the smoking flax and bruised reed, *Isaiah xlii.*

3. *A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.* Hence it is conclusive that they who are effectually called by the grace and Spirit of God, may not perceive when the happy change took place. No wonder that this is the case with the Lord's people in general, if we consider that it happens frequently, when they are first spiritually illuminated, that not only this spiritual illumination hath much natural darkness to contend with, but the mind also uninformed in a doctrinal manner,

manner, what is and what is not the truth of experience. They feel themselves the subjects of much inward contention, inclined to opposite objects ; and though they may pant for God, like David, yet that mighty working of corruption, and the boisterous winds of temptation, which they cannot but be conscious of, will not permit them to draw any conclusion in their own favor, being unapprized that there may be a true perception of and trust in the mediator of the covenant, and the mercy and grace of God through that divine channel, notwithstanding so much ignorance, unbelief, distrust, slavish fear, misgivings, corrupt inclinations, horrid thoughts, and many other evils, that they sensibly feel within them. True beyond doubt it is that they who are born of God are the subjects of very opposite principles, which operate in every power and faculty of the soul, and mix themselves respectively in every act, whether inward or outward. Is there spiritual light in the understanding ? There is also much spiritual darkness.—Doth the eye of faith perceive Christ in the gospel ? What unbelief militates against it ! Doth the soul in some measure discern the path of duty ?—On the contrary what darkness is there concerning it ! Is an evangelical confidence manifested to be of the utmost importance ? What reasonings against it, from the legal obscurity of the mind !

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Yea what fears of delusion ! It appears to the natural heart, as if true faith were but fancy, and as if the confidence of the gospel were but a vain trust. This fear and questioning appears most applicable to natural conscience, which is a powerful enemy to faith and trust in Jesus. The judicious *Dr. Goodwin* considers it as the greatest impediment to the operations of this grace : it knows nothing of salvation by another. It will acknowledge no sovereign but the law of God, therefore is it continually refusing to listen to the cheering declarations of the gospel. If then we would believe, we need stop both our ears to its clamours, and notwithstanding all its objections fly to Jesus. 'Tis from this quarter that the supposition of merit and prerequisites arise. It cannot tell how to be pacified without some personal conformity to the law of God, and as it is dissatisfied without some inherent righteousness, and outward obedience, so is it ever condemning the soul on account of inward corruption and external disobedience, notwithstanding the completeness of Jesus, as the end of the law for righteousness. Though darkness thus prevails in the conscience respecting justification and acceptance, is there not also much blindness and stupidity in it, as a director and guide into the path of God's commandments, which every believer ought to walk in out of love to Jesus for justifying grace and mercy ? It is apt

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enough to condemn for sin, but it is very stupid in preserving from it, especially in times of temptation. It will require with much peremptoriness obedience in a legal, thro' the principle of corruption still remaining, is very faint in its demands thereof in an evangelical way. From all which who doth not see that though a person by the Spirit may believe with that faith, which in its nature is fiducial and assuring, yet he may be far from an assurance that he is a believer and a subject of the special grace of God. To this faculty let us add the memory.—Is this property of the human soul in them who are called the seat alone of those things which are evangelical and spiritual? Doth it always retain unmolested the doctrines, promises, and directions of the gospel? Is it always a faithful remembrancer? Or is it not apt to turn out of door the most honorable guests, for the admission of rebels and traitors? Surely, that man who knoweth but little of his own heart, will at times find that instead of considering the nature of grace and faith, as manifested in the gospel, and comparing himself therewith, that he hath enough to do to keep out of his memory the abominable, horrid, vain, sinful, and impertinent thoughts, which, like the men of Sodom at Lot's door, would be attempting to take possession: and on the contrary, that it requires the utmost diligence and assiduity to retain the least

least impressions which are of a spiritual nature : nay, were not the Lord to appear, not only for the soul before but after grace received, it could do nothing. As it is only by the light and power of the Spirit the Lord's people first believe, even so by his agency alone can they know and conclude they are believers ; for it is as true respecting the faith of evidence, as it is in relation to that of confidence, viz. that only in his light can we see light. But for a further confirmation of this point let us also examine into the imagination. Were this faculty holy, heavenly, spiritual, and incapable of being polluted, then might the beginning of faith be self evident to the subject thereof. But is this the case even with those who are of long standing in the school of Christ ? Do they not find such a multitude of sinful ideas and images spring up in their minds, that if they were to gain the world for thinking a good thought they cannot ? And how ensnaring these are the renewed soul can very well declare, even to his great grief and affliction. Were they not of immediate influence on the will and affections, the believer would not be lost in such a labyrinth as he frequently is, for he well knows that if he regard not the expulsion of these enemies, they will soon captivate him and draw him even into practical transgressions ; not only so, but his soul necessarily at such seasons is engaged in prayer to the

Lord for deliverance from these invaders, knowing he otherwise can have no thoughts of God, Christ, or the things of Christ, with any clearness or satisfaction. Surely, this is no small part of the spiritual warfare ! Is it not the experience at times of many a believer, that a sinful idea will so adhere unto his mind, that it appears to him as if it were an inhabitant, and impossible to be ejected ? And what are his fears then, but that he is of the number of those, over whom sin hath dominion ? At which season to conclude himself a believer appears to him both false and dishonest. If we consider the will, shall we not have alike cause of complaint and lamentation ? How inept to attempt, and how tardy in prosecuting that which is good ! When on the contrary sin attracts it with such violence, that even the regenerated person under temptation, is frequently apprehensive he shall certainly be swallowed up of evil. — It were too tedious to trace the counteractings of corruption through all the affections, since melancholy experience of its too frequent prevalency, connected with the declaration of an inspired apostle touching himself, evidently prove it. *For* (says he) *Rom. vii. 18. I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.* This may suffice, yet were we to extract from the sacred word, what is there left on record, touching the operations of the several graces in the hearts of God's people, might

might we not affirm that each is counteracted by its contending corruption? If this be the case, no marvel then that it is a matter so difficult, truly and properly to determine our state, whether we be in the faith or not; but more so will it appear, when we reflect that it is not only necessary to prove to ourselves that we possess dispositions similar to the graces recorded in the word, but the graces themselves, not the semblance thereof, but the true offspring of an unfeigned faith, even the faith of God's elect, which may be considered, with the utmost propriety, as the root of all. Is our faith the faith of God's people? Our love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and every other grace must be such as are peculiar to them; but if the former be false, the latter must be so likewise.—

What our Lord said in another case may be fitly applied to the matter in hand. *Matt. vii. 16. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* For surely where true faith is not, but only the appearance of it, there the other graces are not in reality. If this be true, no wonder there may be a very brilliant profession in religion, much zeal and boldness, and apparently whatever may adorn the christian character, and yet all be shew and not substance: that this hath been, and still is the unhappy circumstance of some, the truly christian world universally acknowledge. May the Lord of his infinite mercy keep us from a mistake of
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this sort, and suffer not an error so awful to ensnare and fatally to enthrall us, but open the eyes of our understanding, and lead us from the counterfeit of religion to the experience of its reality! From what hath been observed it appears very improbable that there are to be found even any of God's people, who were conscious they truly believed when they first looked to Christ, yet the Lord's dealings in a way of manifestation and comfort with his people are various. Some are kept a long time in sorrow and trouble, while others are soon brought to an happy information that the Lord is their God. That this may be and is the case is plain from various parts of sacred writ, viz. *Ephes. i. 13.* "In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom after ye believed ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." And *Rom. v. 1, 2.* "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, By whom also we have access by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." These scriptures will serve to evidence the case of the latter. But that many are kept in darkness with respect to their interest, and yet God's people, seems to be as clearly set forth in the scripture following. *Isai. l. 10.* "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness,

ness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." What further remains is, that as professing christians are very apt to build their faith and confidence on their past or present frames, and to apply Christ and all his promises, by virtue of a supposed interest in him; it becomes highly necessary that they who do so, be well assured that their frames be true and genuine, and that their interest in Christ is more than imaginary. That a mistake herein is possible, see *Mr. Edwards's Treatise on Religious Affections*, and you will find in that work he would prove that natural joyous frames, as well as seemingly gracious affections, may be mistaken for the real tokens of special grace and favor, when in truth they are but counterfeit. If therefore we should make the counterfeit our only warrant for believing in the gospel and gospel promises, whether this may not be dangerous, let the impartial judge; but allowing we are the subjects of the special and genuine operations of the divine Spirit, even by making these such we certainly honor the Lord's blessings above himself, and make his gifts the foundation of our confidence, rather than his truth and faithfulness in the gospel: for frames being fleeting, they are not so certain a ground to ourselves, but the gospel is a surer warrant and firmer encouragement, to build all our hopes and expectations on Christ, as the end

end of the law for righteousness, to the greater honor of divine truth. It must be allowed that the graces of the Spirit in their operations and effects, also the various special experiences of the divine favor, manifested to the heart, ought not to be treated with indifference and neglect, but should by every means of the Lord's appointment, whether by prayer, meditation, examination, christian conference, hearing or reading the word of God, be kept if possible in lively and thankful remembrance, and considered as the first fruits of the heavenly inheritance; also as certain and indubitable evidences that we shall be partakers thereof, yet if our hope for future grace in time, and at last glory in eternity, be only built thereon, so that when the evidence thereof is clear and bright, we centre in it as our trust and rejoicing, and when hidden and obscured are as those who are without hope, we without question are guilty of a very great error. Ought we not rather to judge in our best season, that what we have received is all the effect of free mercy and favor through Christ alone, that it is vastly short of what is our privilege to enjoy, and what other saints have experienced, that notwithstanding we are the subjects of such rich grace, yet through the indwelling of the old man and his operations, all our actions whether of mind or body, are all sinful in the eye of infinite purity, and that therefore

fore the immaculate holiness and righteousness of the mediator, must be our only plea for all future bestowments of new covenant blessings, whether in time or eternity. And in order to this ought we not to consider the gospel as before described, calling on sinner and saint, thus to trust and hope in the Lord. If we answer yes, we then shall have a ground for faith and hope, when our evidences are so obscured that we cannot come to the Lord persuaded we are children, and prevent inaction in the absence thereof. Surely divine blessings after are as undeserved as before calling! Therefore though grace received be an evidence of future grace to be conferred, yet to ask the latter for sake of the former, and not as a free favor on account of Christ, is paying to the Lord's gifts the honor due alone to him. We do not ask the pardon of our daily offences in this manner; if it were so, what should prevent a total forgetfulness of the mediator, 'till we thought we had reason to question our state? But if we ask the remission of our daily sins solely on his account, why not every communication of grace in the same manner? Wherefore let us be concerned to adopt through grace the language of the great apostle Paul, *Gal. ii, 19, 20.* "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which

which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Having now compleated the inquiry as proposed, I conclude therefore in the words of the same apostle, *Rom. v. 20, 21. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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